

STRONGER TOGETHER: HOW AN ECOSYSTEM OF PARTNERSHIPS LEADS TO CHANGE

COMMUNITY COLLEGES

SAN DIEGO & IMPERIAL COUNTIES

CAREER EDUCATION

Ask any community college leader, staff, or faculty member and they can likely attest that partnerships are hard work. In particular, cross-sector partnerships – with industry, workforce development agencies, and K-12 institutions – have often been viewed as “tangential, transactional, and siloed,” as one community college leader put it. These sorts of partnerships have generally existed to meet a one-time need, such as fulfilling a grant requirement, acquiring retired equipment for hands-on training, or connecting a student with an employer seeking an intern. These partnerships have often been anchored in individuals who developed a relationship during past projects, but who took the partnership with them when moving on to another institution. Such types of tangential connections did not build systemic, lasting relationships – the kind in which partners are motivated to foster sustainable and mutually beneficial partnerships grounded in common long-term goals and desired student outcomes.

In recent years, and as a result of Strong Workforce Program (SWP) efforts, the 10 community colleges in San Diego and Imperial Counties have been intentionally fostering cross-sector collaboration locally and regionally. These community colleges have been partnering with industry, workforce development agencies, and K-12 local education agencies (LEAs) to form a dynamic ecosystem of systems-aligned partnerships that seek to develop a talent pipeline from K-12 through to employment for the region. Engaged partners are gaining new perspectives, exchanging expertise, and committing resources toward building seamless education and career pathways for students. Through a shared responsibility to lift the economic futures of underrepresented residents and their families in San Diego and Imperial Counties, these partners are committed to transformational change. They are building trust, co-creating new mutually beneficial programs, embracing challenges as opportunities, and seeing that, together, all stakeholders – particularly students – achieve more.

The Role of K-12 in the Community College Ecosystem

The SWP is a statewide investment to reform the delivery of career education¹ practices in order to achieve multiple objectives:

- Increase higher education access for students
- Improve career education completion rates and student outcomes
- Align career education programs with the local labor market
- Strengthen career education partnerships with K-12 and industry
- Prepare a workforce of skilled Californians who are able to attain economic security for their futures and their families

¹ California community colleges use the term *career education*, while K-12 education uses the term *career technical education*, for the pathways and programs offered to prepare students for the workplace. For consistency, this article uses *career education* when discussing the programs at either education level.

The SWP includes developing and strengthening pathways that are designed to clearly map students' educational experiences, supplemented with targeted layers of support, in order to help lead students to their education and career goals.

In San Diego and Imperial Counties, intersegmental partnerships between community colleges and K-12 LEAs and Adult Education/Noncredit programs are part of the infrastructure for meeting SWP goals. The community college and K-12 partnerships are critical to providing early engagement with middle and high school students – giving students opportunities to explore their interests, learn about the proficiencies they can gain in community college, and discover possible career options for their futures. Adult Education provides an array of career preparation services, skill-building classes, and job training programs to complete, or it can lead students to community college programs to receive further training and degrees. Most importantly, these intersegmental partnerships develop and support high-interest, experiential career education pathways that guide students from secondary education or Adult Education through community college and to the workplace.

Benefits of long-standing partnerships: Efficiency, quick decision-making, trust

There's no golden rule about how long a partnership takes to reach maturity. However, once it is established, a partnership can pave the way for additional collaborative opportunities. In Imperial County, K-12 LEAs and Imperial Valley College (IVC), the sole community college in the county, have a long-standing partnership. The decades-long professional relationships between leaders from the LEAs and IVC have led to frequent collaboration and expedited decision-making across two education systems committed to improving outcomes of students living in poverty. As a high-poverty, agricultural region geographically separated from the industries of neighboring San Diego County, Imperial County "is known for its 'can-do' mindset, where education leaders lean on each other," according to Efrain Silva, IVC's Dean of Economic and Workforce Development. Dean Silva says that, because of these familiar relationships, IVC and the LEAs "are able to collaborate on new education initiatives and grants with great efficiency and trust. It is a common practice to come together as partners, plan together, and implement." The collaboration requirements of the SWP are a natural fit for Imperial County, where the partnership

between the college and the LEAs preceded the initiative, and where well-established, cross-systems workgroups provide a solid foundation on which to build new work.

Articulation agreements and dual enrollment courses have always been a part of how IVC and high schools work together. More recently, those relationships have led to a newly piloted career education pathway in electrical technology. High school students can begin the pathway through a dual enrollment course, and after graduating, they are able to continue at IVC to complete four additional courses, including work experience. After one year, they can earn an associate degree, Grade Level 1 certification, and a 30-hour Occupational Safety and Health Administration card.



Relationships have been built over time and are not driven by a grant, but by a shared desire. We know that these relationships will only benefit the community as a whole, and we come to the table for that goal.

– Denise Cabanilla, Imperial County Office of Education

Central to the success of these intersegmental partnerships is the Imperial County Office of Education (ICOE), which supports students in grades pre-K through postsecondary across 20 school districts, including Imperial Community College District; 16 elementary, secondary, and unified school districts; and regional occupation centers and programs. The ICOE is a leader and linchpin in Imperial County, acting as the hub for engaging partners and bridging the many stakeholders committed to meeting the needs of the county. Knowing well the strengths and needs of each local district or school, the ICOE serves as the access point for IVC to easily connect with K-12 LEAs. The partners share an important goal – to reduce Imperial County's high unemployment rate. That goal is reflected in the partners' commitment to developing a well-trained workforce to lift the county's families out of poverty and into financial security.

ICOE Director of Higher Education and Adult Learning Denise Cabanilla says that partners want to offer their strengths to move the collective work forward and that “this kind of collaboration isn’t unique in Imperial County. Relationships have been built over time and are not driven by a grant, but by a shared desire. We know that these relationships will only benefit the community as a whole, and we come to the table for that goal.”

Community college outreach to K-12 forges new partnerships

At San Diego and Imperial Counties’ community colleges, deans of career education and workforce development understand the importance of outreach to K-12 LEAs, employing several strategies to communicate information:

- **Middle and High School Career and College Readiness series.** This professional learning series is designed for an audience of middle and high school administrators, counselors, career education leads, and teachers to learn about community college offerings, including state-of-the-art facilities, career education pathways and programs, student services, and options for earning a certificate or degree in nine months or in two years. The leaders, counselors, and teachers, in turn, are expected to inform middle and high school students and their parents about the postsecondary education and career opportunities at the local community colleges. A related outreach event is Middle School Career Days, at which students engage directly with community college staff and learn about viable careers and postsecondary career education programs that can lead to those careers. Both approaches frontload the information, beginning in middle school, so that students begin high school informed and with plans to continue their postsecondary education and earn an industry-valued certificate or degree.
- **Higher Ed Week.** Higher Ed Week, a community college-led outreach event aimed at high school students, is a college fair that enables secondary students to easily access more than two dozen college representatives and recruiters in a single location.
- **Community College student ambassadors.** San Diego and Imperial Counties’ community colleges send student ambassadors into local high school classrooms to talk directly to high school students about community college experiences and available programs.

Disseminating a consistent message through multiple engagement opportunities at both the middle and high school levels has been an essential part of promoting the career education pathways and programs that are available at the community colleges, while highlighting the benefits of a seamless K-14 education path to employment.

As community college and K-12 LEA partnerships focus on strategies to increase student access to higher education, San Diego and Imperial Counties’ community colleges seek to build new collaborative relationships that can take root and grow. For instance, when MiraCosta College Associate Dean of Career Education Zhenya Lindstrom arrived at the college, she saw an opportunity to learn more about the goals of local K-12 districts and to foster a relationship with them that goes beyond the traditional relationship of only troubleshooting articulation agreements. She began reaching out to K-12 career education leaders and counselors, regularly inviting them to attend MiraCosta’s career education meetings, where they could learn more about the many aspects of postsecondary career education and share the challenges they have had in working with community colleges.

Building connections through these types of purposeful and intentional conversations has strengthened the relationships between the K-12 and community college sectors, leading to authentic reasons to collaborate. For MiraCosta, it opened the door to more articulation courses, which require approval from community college faculty and planning with high school faculty on course rigor and student learning expectations. As teachers gained familiarity and confidence in working together, they began to engage more about their content, share books and resources, and learn more about one another’s situational contexts. This collaboration resulted in more approved articulated classes and a tenfold increase in the number of high school students earning college credit through MiraCosta College – from fewer than 100 students in 2014-15 to nearly 1,430 students in 2018-19.

Community colleges are welcoming these better-prepared students, who arrive to campus already familiar with relevant career education skills and knowledge. At the same time, community colleges, which are incentivized to improve their performance as measured by the state’s SWP metrics, can demonstrate growth in postsecondary student-level outcomes.

Investing college resources to increase capacity in K-14 pathways

As the SWP has driven the need for San Diego and Imperial Counties' community colleges to deepen intersegmental relationships, or to forge new relationships, with LEAs, a positive outcome has been the change in the community colleges' perception and desire to collaborate with secondary education. Evidence that these partnerships are growing is seen not only in the increased communication and planning of articulated course alignment to build stronger K-14 pathways, but also in how colleges are opting to share their resources with K-12 LEAs. One approach to strengthening partnerships between community colleges and LEAs involves community colleges using funds to pay for key personnel who support clear and ongoing communication between the two systems, which have very different institutional norms. This approach might include facilitating thoughtfully planned meetings for leaders and teachers from both community colleges and LEAs to come to the table to build trust. For example, Cuyamaca College started sharing its work-based learning coordinator with Grossmont Union High School District to teach résumé writing and interview skills at the high schools, which led to high school teachers inviting the work-based learning coordinator to return to speak to students about college opportunities. MiraCosta College used SWP dollars to pay for a part-time community college instructor to become certified to teach K-12 career education courses at the high schools, where finding qualified career education teachers who have both industry experience and K-12 certification is much more challenging.

A second approach to fostering partnerships between community colleges and the K-12 sector involves community colleges sharing their funds to buy equipment for K-12 partners. One collaborative effort that arose from MiraCosta's aforementioned career education meetings with local high schools was a shared interest, with El Camino High School, in developing a new K-14 career education pathway focused on computer science and cybersecurity. In this pathway, high school students would take Advanced Placement (AP) Computer Science Principles; AP Computer Science; and Computer Science Information Technology, a college-credit-earning dual enrollment course. The computer science dual enrollment course was possible because MiraCosta College offered to use its SWP funds to purchase motherboards, processors, and other necessary tools so that the

high school students could learn about and become familiar with the equipment.

MiraCosta Associate Dean Lindstrom says, "Our partnerships with LEAs show real collaboration – where we are thinking outside of the box, identifying which funding sources we can use creatively to work towards the same goal." It's a win-win for everyone involved: the students gain hands-on learning and a head start on their postsecondary education through their college credit-earning courses, and the institutions strengthen their intersegmental partnerships through innovative collaboration.

The SWP has helped to increase the focus on creating strong career education pathways and to emphasize to students that certificates, credentials, and associate degrees – not only four-year degrees – can lead to financial security. Community college and K-12 LEA partners, committed to engaging in continuous collaborative work, are seeing the potential for transformational change in which new ideas are welcomed and that the responsibility to create and sustain purposeful education and career opportunities for students is shared by many stakeholders.



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– Zhenya Lindstrom, MiraCosta College

East County Education Alliance focuses on workforce readiness

Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District and Grossmont Union High School District (GUHSD) have a long-standing partnership, known as the East County Education Alliance. The partnership was formed to increase collaboration aimed at advancing more East County high school students to college and preparing them for success in the workforce. The East County Education Alliance was a vision of two (now retired) district leaders, Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District Chancellor Cindy Miles and GUHSD superintendent Ralf Swenson, to build upon the existing partnership between the districts, focused on career education and alignment, before the state had even introduced the SWP. With SWP support, the alliance has evolved to focus on the full spectrum of intersegmental collaboration – including articulation and alignment, curriculum, data sharing, and career readiness – to manage work and move it forward.

To increase student engagement and create a more seamless transition to community college, the East County Education Alliance has developed activities and events beyond just community college tours for high school students, including:

- Providing a summer Career Exploration Academy to familiarize East County high school students with community college pathways and teachers before they arrive at college
- Bringing Cuyamaca Community College's work-based learning coordinator to high schools to speak to students about community college opportunities
- Hosting financial aid information nights that bring high school students to the community college campuses
- Utilizing college staff as panelists on high school projects

Collectively, these outreach and engagement activities, along with the broad spectrum of articulated career education courses, have made a significant difference for East County students, especially for underserved students, whose post-high school plans may not have included college before they took part in these activities.

Economic Development Corporations: Matchmakers for Community Colleges and Industry

For years, San Diego has had challenges with developing and retaining key talent, especially young adults and recent college graduates who may be unaware of the area's industries and companies. In 2019, San Diego was awarded a \$3 million investment as part of the Advancing San Diego² initiative, a multi-tiered partnership that works collaboratively to improve the health of San Diego's economy. The initiative involves the coordination and collective efforts of the San Diego Regional Education Development Corporation (EDC), the San Diego Workforce Partnership, the San Diego and Imperial Counties Community Colleges, United Way, and the city of San Diego. A key strategy of the initiative is to connect industry with education to build a diverse and qualified talent pipeline of workers and to ensure financial security for San Diegans, while fueling the region's economic growth.

In the past few years, the EDC has accelerated how education and industry are working together to fill talent shortages in high-demand jobs and to provide pathways to those jobs, especially for residents from underrepresented communities. While the EDC has well-established partnerships with local four-year colleges, it has realized that its goal to decrease socioeconomic status gaps among Californians living in the San Diego and Imperial Counties region requires far-reaching inclusion of low-income residents, immigrants, and communities of color. The community colleges, in particular, are a critical access point for targeting these underserved populations, which are not always well connected to industry. As an essential factor in the initiative's equation, partnering with community colleges has required a new model of collaboration.

Bridging two sectors, the EDC has become the matchmaker between industry and the region's community colleges. As a result, the EDC has learned about programs at the community

² JPMorgan Chase's AdvancingCities initiative is a \$500 million investment in solutions that bolster the long-term vitality of the world's cities that have not benefited from economic growth. In 2019, San Diego was awarded \$3 million, over a period of three years, to build a diverse and qualified talent pipeline between local businesses and education so that its underrepresented residents could access high-demand jobs in San Diego's high-growth sectors. The regional initiative is called Advancing San Diego.

colleges and is better able to talk to industry about the value of community colleges. When employers communicate their workforce needs to the EDC, the EDC, in turn, reaches out to community colleges with programs that are a good fit. The colleges that teach courses aligned with the industry needs become “preferred education providers,” recognized by employers and students. Mesa College and MiraCosta College, for example, are currently recognized as software engineering preferred providers. The colleges collaborate with industry partners on developing software talent for employment in 17 San Diego companies, including Qualcomm, Northrop Grumman, and Illumina.

Together, the colleges and industry are creating a local talent pipeline for San Diego’s high-demand, high-quality jobs, while enriching workplaces with a diverse pool of employees who match the demographics of the community. If a college program does not receive the preferred-provider designation, the EDC facilitates a feedback loop between the college and employers, so that the college can adjust its curriculum to become aligned with industry needs. The initiative deliberately focuses on one industry area at a time, matching businesses to community colleges. It has identified the next two industry focus areas: engineering, followed by marketing and sales.

Industry Partnerships Create New Opportunities

Research data show that employers highly value degrees and industry credentials in new hires.³ However, students can take other avenues to well-paying jobs, enabling them to work toward a degree or credential while employed in an industry. It is worth understanding how community colleges and businesses can leverage their different assets and can partner to support these sorts of solutions, which both benefit industry and help to advance workers.

Internships as a creative solution to prepare community college students

For years, Northrop Grumman, a large aerospace and defense company with a presence in San Diego, has partnered with local four-year colleges, offering internships to students and recruiting

graduates. Northrop Grumman recognized an economic case for promoting diversity and inclusion in its workforce and contributing to the upward mobility of local residents. The company explored partnerships with community colleges, which would allow it to tap into a huge population of qualified but underutilized and under-served talent, while increasing the diversity of the company. One challenge, however, was tackling the company’s hiring barrier of requiring a bachelor’s degree.

Teaming Today to Impact Tomorrow: An industry and education collaborative

Under the leadership of Dr. Kindred Murillo, Superintendent/President of the Southwestern Community College District, and Cindy Gompers-Graves, the now-retired CEO of the South County Economic Development Council (SCEDC), an intentional partnership was formed, joining education and workforce development. A key outcome of this partnership has been a five-year workforce development plan to establish effective strategies for the local emerging workforce. The strategies include forming deliberate partnerships between education and industry, and utilizing the facilitating capabilities of the SCEDC.

Southwestern College and the SCEDC co-planned and co-hosted “Teaming Today to Impact Tomorrow,” a five-part workforce summit series in 2019-20* focused on five industries in need of a qualified workforce to meet growing demands: aerospace and drone technology, maritime, manufacturing, health, and hospitality and tourism. Each summit brought together industry sector experts, organized by the SCEDC, as well as education leaders, K-12 teachers, and Southwestern faculty, organized by Southwestern College. Participants examined data to learn about the economic needs of each industry and to begin to develop new programs that would prepare South County students to enter the local workforce. The successful turnout of 60 to 120 participants at each summit likely reflects a desire to share the responsibility for ensuring that the local economy’s needs are met, while creating more employment opportunities for the communities that participants serve.

** The fourth and fifth summits, planned for March and May 2020, were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

³ Gallagher, S. R. (2018). *Educational credentials come of age: A survey on the use and value of educational credentials in hiring*. Northeastern University Center for the Future of Higher Education & Talent Strategy. https://www.northeastern.edu/cfhets/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Educational_Credentials_Come_of_Age_2018.pdf

After learning that two community colleges in the North County region of San Diego were good matches for piloting a STEM-based partnership, Northrop Grumman representatives met with leaders from the colleges' math and science departments and career centers, to understand the course-taking patterns of students interested in exploring careers in aerospace engineering and computer science. Importantly, Northrop Grumman realized that community college students typically have jobs and stay in school longer than two years to reach completion, and that paid internships could provide students with income, industry experience, and flexibility to continue their studies and transfer to a four-year college to earn the industry-valued degree.

The solution was to develop a program of eight-week paid internships for 19 hours a week, offering community college STEM students a job shadow, mentorship, and work experience alongside a Northrop Grumman employee. Through this program, once interns have earned their associate degree in a STEM major, they are eligible to apply for a full-time assistant engineer/technician position at Northrop Grumman with benefits that include assistance for completing their bachelor's degree. Since 2018–19, Northrop Grumman has extended internship opportunities to five colleges in the region: Mesa College, MiraCosta College, Miramar College, Palomar College, and San Diego City College. The company continues to explore additional partnerships with the region's colleges, learning how to shape other internships that work for the students, the community colleges, and Northrop Grumman.

Small-business internships. In the San Diego region, small businesses with fewer than 100 employees comprise 98 percent of the region's companies and employ about 59 percent of its workforce.⁴ However, they are not as financially able as larger businesses are to offer paid internships or other work-based learning opportunities to students. Advancing San Diego recognizes that small businesses play a critical role in the region's economy. Accordingly, the initiative subsidizes small-business internships and stipends so that students can gain work-based learning experiences in an array of high-demand jobs. This investment in small-business internships – which is currently focused

on the software engineering sector – fosters more partnerships between community colleges and industry, increasing opportunities for community college students to gain hands-on learning and explore a vast array of STEM companies in the region.

Long-term partnership allows for responsive action to meet students' basic needs

Some San Diego companies have long-term commitments to supporting community colleges, which, over time, have proven to be investments with lasting impact. For example, California Coast Credit Union (Cal Coast) has demonstrated its community-oriented values by contributing to San Diego and Imperial Counties' community colleges for decades, giving back through financial support, employee involvement, and community mobilizing.

Recent studies conducted by the Wisconsin HOPE Lab revealed that nearly one half of San Diego Community College District students are at risk of dropping out due to food and housing insecurity.^{5,6} Cal Coast wanted to lower that risk for students, so, in 2019, it coordinated with the San Diego Food Bank to organize a fundraising campaign aimed at filling the food pantries of all of the San Diego and Imperial Counties community colleges. The successful Pack the Pantry campaign provided 50,000 meals to students, and Cal Coast committed to making this an annual effort.

Cal Coast is also concerned with the financial challenges facing community college students, and wants to help ensure that these students stay in school to complete their degrees and increase their chances of being hired for living-wage jobs. It is a major donor to the San Diego Mesa College Foundation, which has a three-pronged focus: supply students with food and toiletries to meet their basic needs, provide students with emergency-relief funds in order to help them stay in school, and provide a series of free financial-literacy workshops to students and faculty. Cal Coast is directly engaged in supporting all three of these focus areas, donating funds for scholarships and leading financial literacy workshops for students and faculty. Cal Coast also hires many students for entry-level jobs, and then works with them

4 San Diego Regional Education Development Corporation. (2018). An in-depth look at San Diego's small business ecosystem. <https://www.sandiegobusiness.org/sites/default/files/An%20In-Depth%20Look%20at%20San%20Diego's%20Small%20Business%20Ecosystem%20-%20WEB.PDF>

5 Goldrick-Rab, S., Richardson, J., Schneider, J., Hernandez, A., Cody, C. (2018). *Still hungry and homeless in college*. University of Wisconsin HOPE Lab. <https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Wisconsin-HOPE-Lab-Still-Hungry-and-Homeless.pdf>

6 San Diego Community College District. (2018). *Follow up report on food and housing insecurities – Wisconsin HOPE Lab Study*. [https://www.sdccd.edu/docs/SSDept/Presentations/Board/HOPE%20Lab_Basic%20Needs%20Survey%20\(May%2010,%202018\).pdf](https://www.sdccd.edu/docs/SSDept/Presentations/Board/HOPE%20Lab_Basic%20Needs%20Survey%20(May%2010,%202018).pdf)

so they can advance to other positions or internships within the credit union.

Cal Coast Director of Business Development Cathy Gilhooly, who serves on the board of the San Diego Mesa College Foundation and teaches financial literacy workshops at Mesa College and Grossmont College, says that, as a Grossmont College alumna, she can leverage her company to give back to the community. An important insight that she has gained from the partnership between Cal Coast and the foundation is that “it’s not enough to get funds in the hands of students to pay for college.” She adds that “know[ing] the context of their lives and the barriers they face” is also critical in order to inform how a partner such as Cal Coast can engage students for the duration of their college schooling. Cal Coast has shown how a long-term partnership remains effective, by continuously assessing needs, problem solving, and acting responsively with new strategies to support college students and the local economy.

Tips for Developing Cross-Sector Partnerships

To prepare this report, we spoke with a dozen individuals from across the region’s community colleges, K-12 LEAs, industry, and the San Diego Regional EDC, all of whom shared their knowledge and experiences about community college partnerships. This section provides tips for community college leaders and career education staff who are engaged in new or continuing efforts to develop and sustain partnerships that will contribute to the region’s talent pipeline through successful pathways for students.

Just get started. Together, identify a shared goal of both partners. As you envision the possibilities, plan for a small-scale pilot and give it time. Listen to what the needs and capacities are on both sides, asking *Why do you want to do this? What is*

the context of this community? What may be barriers? How can we integrate our strengths? The *why* for the partnership cannot be because of a grant.

Value partners as more than just a funding source. Becoming a partner requires commitment, collaboration, and compromise over the long term. A successful partnership is an investment in maintaining ongoing communication, building trust, and sustaining practices, not only providing funds.

Leverage organizational support. College career centers can play a crucial role in helping businesses to understand what is feasible and how to work with faculty, work-based learning coordinators, and job placement coordinators to identify the right students for internships. College career counselors can reassure companies that students are taking career readiness courses, such as communications, leadership, and business, that will help them transition into the workplace. For businesses, the full support of a human resource department and a talent acquisition team, if these resources exist, is important in sustaining effective partnerships between businesses and community colleges and in helping to design internship opportunities.

Recognize barriers and remove them. Enter the partnership with a mindset for problem solving and change. Think outside the box to develop solutions that meet the needs of students, the partnering businesses, and the community colleges – such as the internship program that Northrop Grumman designed.

Anticipate that partnerships are dynamic. Effective partnerships require that all partners have a mutual understanding of how the other partners work. Just as with personal relationships, sustaining a partnership requires managing it and practicing transparent communication. Partnerships need institutional leadership, with a team of champions on board, to ensure longevity and to weather staff turnover.

To learn more about this work, please contact Dr. Danene Brown, Chair, San Diego and Imperial Counties Community Colleges Regional Consortium, at danene.brown@gcccd.edu.

Developed in partnership with WestEd, this report is part of a series about the collaborative efforts of the San Diego and Imperial Counties Community Colleges Regional Consortium to strengthen education and workforce opportunities and to increase economic mobility in the region. For more information, visit <https://myworkforceconnection.org/>.

Suggested Citation: San Diego and Imperial Counties Community Colleges Regional Consortium. (2020). Stronger Together: How an ecosystem of partnerships leads to change.