

Evaluation Brief

CHECK IN TO CHECK OUT:

A CASE STUDY OF COLUMBIA COLLEGE'S HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

APRIL 2020



BRIEF BACKGROUND

This case study is part of SPR's evaluation of the California Apprenticeship Initiative.

The evaluation includes an additional three case studies, an apprenticeship brief, and a pre-apprenticeship brief, which can be found at :

<https://caihub.foundationccc.org/Research-and-Reports>

Recent data show that approximately 70 percent of registered apprenticeships in California are in the construction trades, even though the construction industry employs just 5 percent of the state's workforce. By contrast, fewer than 1 percent are in manufacturing, transportation, and healthcare occupations combined, even though approximately 18 percent of the state's workers are employed in these industries.¹ In 2015, to help address these types of imbalances and establish apprenticeships in industries where they are uncommon—particularly industries deemed by the state as a priority for economic growth—California's governor and state legislature created the ongoing California Apprenticeship Initiative (CAI) grant program.

The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office administers CAI and, between 2016 and 2018, awarded 40 grants (totaling \$27.5 million) to community colleges, school districts, and their partners. One of the grants was awarded to Columbia College, located in Tuolumne County and part of the Yosemite Community College District, to support the creation of the Hospitality Management apprenticeship program in partnership with two local employers. This brief describes the program, including its development and structure as well as what apprentices and employers report about their experiences in the program. The brief concludes with a discussion of the program's sustainability.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- **Employer Engagement:** Columbia College identified its two initial employer partners during the grant application phase through extensive networking in the community with pre-existing and new professional contacts.
- **Program Structure:** The Hospitality Management apprenticeship program is a two-year program; apprentices usually spend one day per week in class on campus and four days on site at the employer's location engaging in on-the-job training in a range of hospitality occupations.
- **Apprentice Recruitment and Selection:** Both college program staff and employers advertise each position among their networks or incumbent employees.
- **Apprentice Perspectives:** Apprentices like the program because it provides them with a free college education, on-the-job training in multiple hospitality occupations, and paid work experience.
- **Employer Perspectives:** Employers appreciate that the apprentices are engaged and productive members of their teams.
- **Sustainability:** Columbia College is continuing its hospitality apprenticeship program with the two initial employers and has expanded to another employer in the region.

Implementation Findings and Lessons Learned

Feedback from college staff, employers, and apprentices indicates several key findings and lessons that may help others who are developing apprenticeship programs.

Employer Engagement

- **Columbia College staff and leadership have identified employer partners through extensive and ongoing networking.** Staff indicated that developing and maintaining a network of contacts in the local business community was and continues to be an effective strategy for identifying employer partners. For example, in early 2016, Columbia College hosted its first hospitality advisory board meeting. Over 60 people attended, and college staff had many opportunities for networking with hospitality industry employers.
- **Employer partners are interested in investing in the apprenticeship program because it provides a comprehensive curriculum and helps them with recruitment and retention.** The program gives incumbent employees an opportunity to move up the career ladder and access higher education. It makes it easier for employers to find new qualified job candidates, as the college's recruitment allows them to reach a different audience.
- **Employers see the program as an investment in the community because it expands education opportunities for local residents.**

Program Design

The hospitality apprenticeship program is a two-year program. Apprentices usually spend one day per week in class on campus and four days on site at the employer's location, engaging in on-the-job training in a range of hospitality occupations. Successful program completers receive both a college certificate and a journeyman apprentice certificate, and those who complete required general education classes receive an associate of science degree in hospitality management. Program staff identified key lessons learned during program development:

- **Flexibility in program implementation is helpful.** Employers have the option of adding more specific skill checklists that are customized to their own procedures. For example, one department created a series of checklists about hotel procedures ranging from guest check-in to housekeeping.
- **An orientation about the apprenticeship program provided to all department staff helps with onboarding.** It clarifies the roles of apprentices, the rotation model, and duties of mentors to other company staff.

Apprentice Perspectives

On a survey administered to apprentices in the Hospitality Management program, a majority (89 percent) rated it as helpful (50 percent) or very helpful (39 percent) in preparing them to work in hospitality occupations. On the same survey and in focus groups, participants specifically noted that the program had helped them in several ways:

- **Apprentices receive a tuition-free college education and are paid while being trained.** As one apprentice stated, “Everything [related to going to college] is free, and we’re getting paid.”
- **The work experience allows apprentices to execute what they learn in the classroom and to master their skills.** One commented that he likes “learning things here and applying it when I am working.”
- **The classroom training component helps apprentices understand why job tasks are done in a particular way.** As one apprentice described it, “It is nice to know why [you are doing a task that way]. Then it helps with problem solving. If you know where you started from, it helps you figure it out.”
- **Apprentices thought the program would help them advance in their careers.** They explained that the program would help them gain promotions or find better jobs for several reasons: They would earn a college credential; they were learning key skills; and they were gaining work experience across many different hospitality positions.

“There is a lot of gray area in our field, to where you have to make up a solution by yourself. And it helps to have that hands-on experience.”

—Program apprentice

Employer Perspectives

The employer partners appreciate the Hospitality Management apprenticeship program because it provides them with qualified and enthusiastic employees. To this end, they noted several specific benefits and successes:

- **The program provides employers with well-trained and productive employees.** As one representative explained, the apprentices “are more knowledgeable [than they were at the beginning of the program]. They become better employees by having that holistic vision of operations.”
- **Apprentices are enthusiastic about their work, and this enthusiasm benefits the company more broadly.** One employer explained that the enthusiasm is contagious and increases staff morale in general. Moreover, some non-apprentices, encouraged by seeing apprentices taking classes, have expressed an interest in furthering their own education.
- **One employer partner specifically appreciated the college’s assistance with recruiting candidates for apprenticeship positions.** As he explained, the college is able to access candidates that his company’s human resources department typically does not reach. Additionally, he said the apprentices recruited by the college are also more likely to have a passion for the field.

“Participants are “are engaged about learning and have helped out quite a bit. They are productive members of the team.”

—Employer partner representative

Program Sustainability

Three main factors have helped Columbia College expand its apprenticeship work: continued employer support, ongoing outreach to the regional business community, and support from college leadership. The college has expanded its work in several ways:

- **The Hospitality Management apprenticeship program has expanded to another employer in the region.** The college identified this partner through its usual engagements with the region’s business community.
- **Course content is now accessible through distance education so apprentices in a neighboring region can access the classes.**
- **Columbia College has expanded to other apprenticeship areas.** The college was awarded other CAI grants to establish a new Child Development apprenticeship program and a Fire Science pre-apprenticeship program.

1. Apprentice statistics come from California Department of Industrial Relations (2016), State of California Department of Industrial Relations Division of Apprenticeship Standards: 2016 Legislative Report (<https://www.dir.ca.gov/DAS/reports/2016LegReport.pdf>) and from internal DAS statistics. Construction, manufacturing, transportation, and utilities statistics come from California’s Employment Development Department ([https://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/file/indhst/cal\\$shws.xls](https://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/file/indhst/cal$shws.xls)), as does the health care statistic (https://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/SpecialReports/Health_Care_in_CA.pdf).



ABOUT THIS SERIES

Suggested citation for this brief: Hebbar, L., Dunham, K., Wolff, K., and Oettinger, J. (2020). *Check in to check out: A case study of Columbia College’s Hospitality Management apprenticeship program*. Oakland, CA: Social Policy Research Associates.

Other briefs in this series can be found **HERE** and include:

- CAI Apprenticeship Evaluation Brief
- CAI Pre-App-Evaluation Brief
- Columbia College Case Study
- Mission College Case Study
- SCCC Pre-Apprenticeship Case Study
- WERC Case Study Brief

