

Collaborative Partner: Fresno Unified School District

Project #1: Expanding Opportunities in High-Quality Pathways

Pathway(s): Engineering, Accounting and Single Subject Teachers

Project Summary

Fresno Unified School District (FUSD) with the Collaborative partners will be executing their proposal (attached) to support the success of guided pathways that lead to seamless student transitions, dual enrollment credit, work-based learning opportunities, and aligned education with regional workforce needs. This support is leveraged with robust curriculum and instruction, shared professional learning with high school and post-secondary educators, integrated programs of study that effectively communicate the required wrap-around services for students in transition, and student-centered opportunities designed to provide high quality experiences for students in the Fresno Unified School District. Key partners, shared in the Collaborative Partner section above, will be instrumental in various roles, including: guest speaking, industry-specific summer camps on college campuses, industry tours, mentoring, job shadowing, design thinking professional learning and innovative approaches to teaching and learning, advisory board support and shared best practices for curriculum development and alignment. Career pathway students will be mentored by individuals that have knowledge and skills that are important to a balanced and robust education. Identified pathways within STEM related fields, including: engineering, agriculture, education, advanced manufacturing, finance, and technology will offer students the unique opportunities outlined in this proposal. The key elements addressed in this application directly reflect student needs when addressing our community's demographics, including a focus on disproportionately impacted students. It is necessary to expand this specific support to offer the highest quality career pathway experiences to our students and to meet the priorities and metrics of our region.

Identified outcomes are intended to: 1) enable high school students (especially disproportionately impacted students) the opportunity to personally experience on-campus living to reduce or eliminate misconceptions of post-secondary challenges. 2) allow students to successfully complete transferable college credit courses in high school, thus accelerating their timeline to college completion and success in college. 3) Host industry sector conversation events for the pathways that align within our plan to bring together education, workforce, and industry. These events will include a morning externship opportunity for attendees and then collaborative conversations will take place in the afternoon as an effort to align programs of study with partners, examine current work-based learning opportunities and create new experiences for students, and provide the opportunity for K12, post-secondary and industry to discuss pathway support and summer camp opportunities. 4) Expand the number of teacher preparation high school pathways and increase the number of students who enroll in pathway

programs in high school focusing on education and STEM related fields. 5) Document activities and outcomes for successful replication in communities throughout California.

Project Progress Report

Fresno Unified's Department of College and Career Readiness (CCR) continues to successfully administer and implement multiple state-funded CTE projects in direct coordination with the district administration, school sites, Grants Office, and the County Office of Education. CCR is heavily invested in working with industry, community, and higher education partnerships to support all school site program activities and is utilizing the K16 Collaborative to leverage community resources and provide new and expanded opportunities to the students of Fresno Unified. We recognize that our community's strength lies in its commitment to addressing challenges in education and career readiness collaboratively.

In Fall 2020, the District adopted a new vision, mission, values and goals with a focus on students, staff, families and community. After comprehensively engaging stakeholders, a Strategic Plan was created that set a trajectory for Fresno Unified's focus through 2025. This Strategic Plan was developed to ensure that our district has a clear purpose and aligned strategies to achieve our goals. It was built on a foundation centered on students, their families, and staff with five goals to drive our work and concentrate our efforts toward accomplishing our mission and vision for all students. These goals include Student Achievement, Student Experiences, Student Engagement, Staff Recruitment and Retention, and Family Engagement.

For each goal, our district is developing a specific set of objectives and key results followed by a set of leading and lagging indicators that will measure our performance over the five-year life of this plan. The District's K16 Collaborative efforts closely align to Student Experiences as this goal focuses on expanding student-centered and real-world learning experiences. CCR views this as an opportunity to develop a strategic menu of options for students that will allow for student choice, leverage student learning styles, foster the development of career skills and competencies, and incorporate the application of this learning to authentic community-based problems.

The implementation of our K16 Collaborative efforts, in alignment to our district's vision, mission, values and goals has been challenging given the impacts of COVID 19 and the safety and health guidelines that accompany shifts in educational services. College credit course enrollment has dropped based on two primary factors: the inability to meet the hour requirement of hands-on learning based on the approved course content and challenges with communicating and marketing to our students and families about the opportunities and benefits of dual enrollment. CTE staff worked diligently with students, their families, and site teachers, counselors, and leaders to set up student and family informational meetings and weekly office hours to provide opportunities for learning. Summer 2021 camps are currently in the design phase with the hope of having students on campus to experience hands-on learning

activities. However, we are currently working with an organization to provide virtual internship opportunities specific to technology and start-up elements associated with both Engineering and Accounting/Business. Staff is continuing to meet with strategic district partners to identify groups of students who have historically been marginalized. Our goal is to expand their participation so that students become better self-advocates for their education and receive relevant and meaningful experiences.

One milestone reached this past semester was the alignment and training of Fresno Unified dual enrollment teachers in Canvas and Simple Syllabus. The trainings were presented by Fresno City College and allowed for better alignment and understanding of required course documentation.

Fresno Unified utilizes a decision-making model that includes research-based perspectives and support. The research highlighted below helps strengthen and drive opportunities for specific student demographic groups and is used for validating current CCR work.

Underrepresented minorities such as African American, Latinx, and Native-Americans as well as English learners are particularly underrepresented in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Students who have had opportunities to participate in STEM classes when they are younger are more likely to take continue to participate in STEM classes as they move throughout their educational journey (National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering, 2013). Blacks and Hispanics make up around a quarter of the overall U.S. workforce, but together they account for only 16% of those employed in STEM occupations. Past studies have raised a number of possible reasons for this underrepresentation. Two of these factors are having less access to quality STEM related educational opportunities and that these groups not being encouraged at early age to learn about STEM fields (MacPhee, Farro, and Silvia, 2013). Expanded STEM experiences and opportunities will broaden a student's understanding of specific career paths available in local colleges and create an understanding of employment opportunities in STEM.

Foster youth typically live in environments where they do not have access to technology or professionals with a STEM background. Many are unaware of the career paths available in the science and technology industry. Foster youth are less likely to perform at grade level in math as compared to their peers. It is critical that we take steps to close these educational engagement and achievement gaps to help foster students the best options to reach their full potential (Wondra, 2021). Taking steps to ensure all foster and homeless youth have access to programs that introduce them to these career pathway options will help close these equity gaps.

Research also tells us that these same students are at risk of having less exposure to career readiness opportunities. These students are not afforded the opportunity to see or engage with careers that might interest them. Through targeted recruitment, focused and specific

marketing materials, and the CTE site supports of Coordinators, Job Developers & Career Centers, an expanded focus for foster youth, African Americans, English learners, and low-income students will provide these students with validated high-quality CTE Pathways that will engage them through dual enrollment, industry certifications and expanded work-based learning opportunities with the goals of teaching students to access resources and empowering them to be better self-advocates in their educational journey.