



Learning Aligned Employment Program Advocacy Needs

The San Diego Community College District's Educational Services Division has been working across San Diego City College, San Diego Mesa College, and San Diego Miramar College to support a districtwide, student-centered, implementation approach to the Learning-Aligned Employment Program (LAEP). Throughout this process, several challenges have arisen. A districtwide workgroup, with representation from City, Mesa, and Miramar Colleges including financial aid, career services, business services, human resources, accounts payable, and senior leadership, identified four [Title 3 Division 5 Part 42 Chapter 2 Article 18](#) and [CSAC Learning-Aligned Employment Program \(LAEP\) Handbook](#) implementation interpretations as obstacles to student-centered administration of LAEP:

1. Unmet Need (Ed Code) – Restriction of Hours
2. Restrictions to use of Funds (Ed Code and CSAC Handbook)
3. Ties to Expected Family Contributions (EFC) (CSAC Handbook)
4. Restrictions to Funding Distribution Methods (CSAC Handbook)

See details on page 2 and 3.

In February 2023, advocacy for the reconsideration of these four areas was endorsed by the San Diego Community College District Chancellor's Cabinet (representation includes the Chancellor, all Vice Chancellors, and all four Presidents from City, Mesa, Miramar, and Continuing Education). [Click here to see the document that was shared and endorsed.](#)

These four areas were shared with the statewide LAEP coordinators from CSAC, shared during a San Diego Imperial Counties Regional Consortium event, and presented during a statewide LAEP workgroup meeting.

During these presentations and awareness building opportunities, representatives from a variety of colleges and organization expressed support.

In September 2023, a fifth area of concern was added August 2023 to address general concerns regarding noncredit student participation:

5. Unmet Need (Ed Code) – exclusion of noncredit students

See page 3 for details.

We continue to seek engagement and support for the reconsideration of all five areas.

Call to action: *Sign this document to endorse the request for reconsideration across the five areas and to support engagement with CA State Legislature and CSAC to strengthen student-centered implementation of LAEP.*

1. Unmet Need (Ed Code) – Restriction of Hours

Ed Code states the institution shall determine the hours of learning-aligned employment taking into consideration the extent of the student’s financial need.

Issue: Hours allowable for a student to work will be unique due to having to consider unmet need and calculate with different pay rates dependent on placement.

Impact: This guidance disincentivize employer participation as the funding available is not aligned with successful completion of expectations of the position and compensation but rather restricted by the financial aid unmet need of the student complicating matters for employers and undermining the value of the program to employers.

Recommended Resolution: Limit the assessment of financial need (as determined by the hosting institution pursuant to the methodologies approved by the United States Department of Education for use in awarding funds provided under Title IV of the federal Higher Education Act of 1965) to eligibility criteria only, not assessment of financial aid packages.

Ed Code Reference: [Title 3 Division 5 Part 42 Chapter 2 Article 18](#) - 69960 sub-section F.

2. Restrictions to use of Funds (Ed Code and CSAC Handbook)

Ed Code and CSAC differ in the guidance provided. CSAC has indicated funding cannot be used to cover mandatory benefits.

Issue: Ed Code does not define “compensation” referring to wages only. On the other hand, CSAC has indicated that LAEP funding cannot be used to cover sick leave or mandatory benefits, which typically is between 2.175% of the cost of wages.

Impact: There is no funding source available to cover this cost and it was not presented to colleges upon signing the LAEP Institutional Program Agreement (IPA). This may prevent colleges from meeting the required placement by 6/30/23.

Recommended Resolution: It is reasonable to assume that the code written meant to cover both wages and benefits when “compensation” was used in the Ed Code prior to “wages” being included in CSACs Handbook.

Ed Code Reference: [Title 3 Division 5 Part 42 Chapter 2 Article 18](#) - 69962

CSAC Handbook Reference: [Fiscal Management and Payments - Payments](#)

3. Ties to Expected Family Contributions (EFC) (CSAC Handbook)

Guidance has been provided by CSAC that the compensation earned apply to Expected Family Contributions (EFC) soon to be known as Student Aid Index (SAI).

Issue: The compensation apply to the Expected Family Contributions (EFC) soon to be known as Student Aid Index (SAI) thereby reducing future financial aid eligibility.

Impact: The program will fail to meet its statutory intent of helping students to earn money to help defray their educational costs while gaining education- aligned, career-related

employment. Instead, they will be penalized for participating, as the income earned will be considered for programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Cal Fresh.

Recommended Resolution: Limit the assessment of financial need (as determined by the hosting institution pursuant to the methodologies approved by the United States Department of Education for use in awarding funds provided under Title IV of the federal Higher Education Act of 1965) to eligibility criteria only, not assessment of financial aid packages. We recognize institutions are able to determine whether a taxable income offset can be applied to LAEP income in the need analysis for financial aid eligibility.

Ed Code Reference: [Title 3 Division 5 Part 42 Chapter 2 Article 18](#)

CSAC Handbook Reference: [Fiscal Management and Payments - Payments](#)

4. Restrictions to Funding Distribution Methods (CSAC Handbook)

CSAC has provided guidance requiring LAEP funding to be distributed as a “paycheck for hours worked” and not as stipends/one-time payment.

Issue: Recent CSAC guidance limits LAEP fund distributions to wages only and restricts the use of stipends/one-time payment due to the commissions’ interpretation of Ed Code, specifically section 69954. However, there is no definition of the term “employ” nor is there written guidance on the required fund distribution system, specifically item #3 in the LAEP agreement states that institutions “...agrees to establish and maintain a written payment policy for the LAEP program, if different from the standard disbursement policy used by the Institution.”

Impact: This restriction functionally will limit or outright exclude any students from Healthcare programs from participating as national and state accreditation standards prevent Allied Health students from being employees during their workforce training through Directed Clinical Practice. For example, at San Diego Mesa College this would result in excluding up to 3,000 students who enroll in Healthcare courses according to the Strong Workforce Program (SWP) Launchboard or nearly 400 full-time equivalent students.

Recommended Resolution: Allow colleges to locally determine disbursement policies as stated in the LAEP agreement signed by the colleges. Provide no additional restrictions to disbursement beyond encouraging colleges to determine distribution models that maximize student benefit and enable student friendly implementation models. Allow the use of stipends/one time payments to students should a college choose to do so.

Ed Code Reference: [Title 3 Division 5 Part 42 Chapter 2 Article 18](#)

CSAC Handbook Reference: [Fiscal Management and Payments - Payments](#)

5. Unmet Need (Ed Code) – Exclusion of Noncredit Students

Issue: The method to determine the unmet need is based on the students’ eligibility for financial aid, which limits access to LAEP funding for all students enrolled exclusively in noncredit programs.

Impact: The CA Community College System has two fully noncredit institutions serving approximately thirty-five thousand noncredit students per year. During the 2022-23 program year, there were over 800,000 enrollments in noncredit courses statewide. All students enrolling exclusively in noncredit programs have been excluded from participation in LAEP.

Now that Work Experience has been approved for noncredit, we will see an increase in noncredit students formally pursuing internships. Under current LAEP guidance, these students will be unable to participate in LAEP.

Recommended Resolution: Commit to exploration of possible revisions to eligibility that enable fully noncredit students of low-income to participate. Leverage existing student information collected regularly by noncredit institutions and programs to confirm low-income status and membership in student groups prioritized by current LAEP legislation. Consider the use of noncredit student enrollment with an educational goal of “earn a career technical certificate,” “prepare for a new career (acquire job skills),” “advance in current job (update job skills),” or “maintain certificate or license” as a way to meet eligibility requirements.

Ed Code Reference: Title 3 Division 5 Part 42 Chapter 2 Article 18 - 69960 sub-section F.

Take Action:

Please sign below indicating support for the advocacy points above and willingness to engage in further dialogue with the CA State Legislature and California Student Aid Commission

First and Last Name:

Title or Role:

Organization:

Signatures:

Date: