



Contact: Sheri Aguirre
Civilian Agency
916-209-6644
sheri@civilian.agency

Sarah Flocken
Civilian Agency
240-630-0316
sarah@civilian.agency

San Diego and Imperial Counties Community Colleges Unite to Fill Growing Labor Skills Gap

New study finds shortage of qualified “middle-skill” workers in San Diego region; New regional Career Education campaign promotes programs targeting these well-paying, in-demand jobs

JUNE 20, 2018— SAN DIEGO, CA— A [report](#) released today by the San Diego-Imperial Center of Excellence for Labor Market Research (COE) finds that “middle-skill” jobs, which require more training than a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree, comprise a significant and growing portion of the San Diego labor market—and they are the jobs that employers are struggling to fill. In conjunction with this report, San Diego and Imperial Counties Community Colleges (SDICCC) launched a new effort to prepare their students for these well-paying, in-demand middle-skill careers.

In 2017, 38 percent of employment in [San Diego County](#) and 36 percent in [Imperial County](#) were for middle-skill jobs, and these percentages are projected to grow by 2022, according to the report. Between 2017 and 2022, the San Diego-Imperial COE projects that there will be more than 47,000 job openings per year in the area’s 100 top middle-skill job categories—the vast majority of which are facing a shortage of qualified workers.

These middle-skill jobs pay well. According to the study:

- In San Diego County, workers in the top 100 middle-skill jobs earn a median hourly wage of \$26.70 (or \$55.5K annually) compared to a median hourly wage of \$19.30 (or \$40K annually) for all jobs in the region.
- In Imperial County, workers in the top 100 middle-skill jobs earn a median hourly wage of \$23.96 per hour (or \$49.8K annually) compared to a median hourly wage of \$14.42 (or \$30K annually) for all jobs in the region.

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Career Education Programs Poised to Launch Students into These Jobs

The regional marketing campaign features a new, unified brand for Career Education at all ten community colleges, and the programs being highlighted align with in-demand industry sectors, providing students the skills, certificates and degrees needed to land these jobs. The regional campaign targets both high school students and adults who want to gain new skills with a unified message, “Learn More. Earn More.”

“To ensure our students are qualified for these job opportunities, we align our Career Education programs to meet the regional labor market demand,” said Dr. Sunny Cooke, Superintendent and President of the MiraCosta Community College District. “We also have powerful partnerships with local employers to help students find their path and launch their careers.”

Seventy-one percent of SDICCC Career Education students who complete a program are employed one year after finishing, according to the 2016/17 Cal-PASS Plus LaunchBoard, a statewide data system supported by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. Additionally, Career Education at a community college in San Diego and Imperial Counties is the most affordable option. Students in the region pay an average of \$1,104 in fees per year, compared to \$5,472 at a California State University, \$12,192 at a University of California school and \$34,740 at a private institution.

With more than 200 Career Education programs to offer, the new campaign also highlights programs geared toward jobs in occupations with the highest need for workers, such as industrial machinery mechanics, healthcare support workers or computer user support specialists. These Career Education students will benefit from less time in classrooms, more time spent in hands-on learning environments—and valuable connections to local businesses through internships, apprenticeships, and other work experience.

“Partnering with community colleges in the San Diego region has given us a new pipeline for talent that’s critical to our shipyard’s success,” said Dennis DuBard, public and government relations manager at General Dynamics NASSCO. “As the only full-service shipyard on the West Coast of the United States, our workforce is an important asset to the U.S. Navy and NASSCO’s commercial customers.”

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San Diego and Imperial Counties

The regional marketing campaign is part of California's Strong Workforce Program. The goal of the \$200 million state investment is to create one million more middle-skill workers to produce a job-ready workforce for employers and enable social mobility for more Californians. A new regional Career Education website, [CareerEd.org](https://www.careered.org), features information about career paths and resources to guide prospective students through the application process.

About Career Education in San Diego and Imperial Counties

San Diego and Imperial Counties have ten California community colleges that offer quality Career Education. Whether learning new skills, earning a certificate or an associate degree, Career Education students gain real-world experience that lead them to in-demand, well-paying jobs. With more than 200 programs to choose from, students learn by exploring, collaborating and doing, with hands-on training and taught by instructors and professionals in their field of study.

The ten San Diego and Imperial Counties Community Colleges offering students the opportunity to "Learn More. Earn More." are: Cuyamaca College, Grossmont College, Imperial Valley College, MiraCosta College, Palomar College, San Diego City College, San Diego Continuing Education, San Diego Mesa College, San Diego Miramar College, and Southwestern College. To learn more, visit [CareerEd.org](https://www.careered.org).

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