ICT Educator Webinar Series

How SynED Provides Faculty Support Tools and Resources Focused on Student Success

**January 29, 2021**

Contents

[00:00:00] Welcome

STEVE WRIGHT: Good morning, everybody. I'm Steve Wright. I'm the Statewide Director for the ICT sector team, which is part of the Workforce and Economic Development Department of the California Community College System, and these webinars are brought to you by our entire sector team and produced by Nicole Sherman, and our guest speakers volunteer their time for the sake of student success in our system.
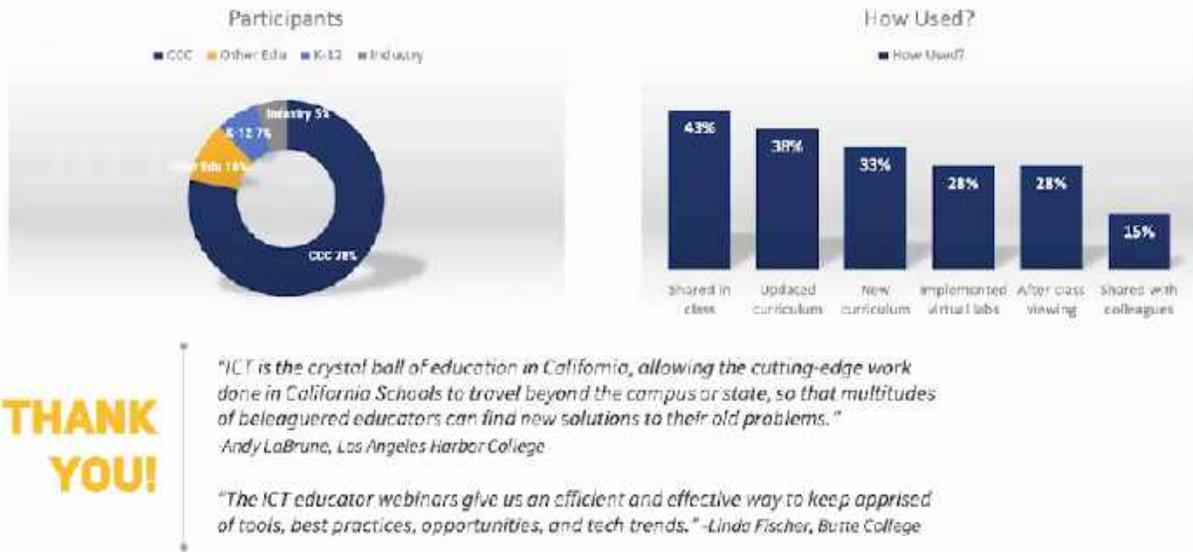
Now, I want to show this next slide one more time, because it was such a great survey for us, and I showed it last week. If you haven't seen it, we were real happy. Out of all the people that have viewed our webinars over the last year, we asked them, "Who are you and how do you use this stuff? And could you give us a few words of wisdom about what you what your experience is like?"

And we love the words of wisdom, but I think not only realizing that we're hitting our target with community college faculty here, which is the main purpose for doing this, is we provide relevant stuff for you guys, but how you use it. You're sharing in a class, updating curriculum, new curriculum. This is this is terrific. This is the student impact that, certainly in terms of our grants we're trying to do, and we appreciate that.

FEBRUARY 5

New Opportunities for Student Success with ISACA Certifications

FEBRUARY 19

Cisco Talent Bridge: Connecting NetAcad Students to Opportunities in the Digital Workforce

FEBRUARY 26

2021 Hiring Trends and Salary Outlook for Creative and IT Jobs, with Robert Half

So, coming up, we keep doing these things. Today is our fiftieth, and in the next few weeks, after today, we have the ISACA certification people are going to talk about what they do and how their mentoring and networking group help students after they get certification. Then we're going to go to Cisco Talent Bridge the next week and find out how they're helping students get placed. And then we're going to get Robert Half, with their creative and IT jobs, talk about what's out there in the market marketplace.

[00:01:47] Today's Agenda

LEE YARBOROUGH

Lee Yarborough has over 15 years experience in the education field. She has worked in higher education institutions, independent schools, and public charter schools. Lee earned her Master's Degree in School Counseling at Long Island University, and has taught adult learners in Washington D.C., Southern California, NYC and online.

She has provided career counseling and job placement services to students throughout the South Central Coast Region and has a passion for helping individuals discover and achieve their educational and professional goals. Currently, a certified Compression Planning Specialist and Project Manager at SynED, Lee is excited about the future of education and helping individuals, teams and community colleges achieve their goals.

STEVE WRIGHT: Today is going to be interesting. I was part of a SynED in the early days, years ago. And originally, the simple goal was to help community colleges do what they could not do effectively themselves for a variety of logistical and expertise reasons, especially when grants were coming. Grants come in with money, and the person who gets the grant doesn't have any more time that they used to have. So, SynED, I think, got started realizing that there was a need to help people in that way.

And many of you have met the SynED team figure—Scott Young, Guy Smith, Teana Fredeen, Donna Woods, Liz Fraumann, Chrissy Ybarra, and others at SynED, and a lot of them are here today to talk to you. You see them when they're exhibiters at CCCAOE or part of their projects.

But today, Lee Yarborough of SynED, who has worked with many community colleges with regard to student success programs, is going to fill you in on what she's been doing as well as other SynED projects and capabilities. So, with that, Lee, I'm going to go ahead and hand it over to you.

LEE YARBOROUGH: Great. Thank you, Steve. Well, we are really excited to be here today. And on the call also, as Steve mentioned, we have Teana and Chrissy and Liz. Would you guys introduce yourself while I figure out my PowerPoint really quick, OK?

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CHRISSY YBARRA: Sure. I'm Chrissy Ybarra. I probably have talked to some of you. I am a project manager at SynED, and I work closely with a couple of the regional directors, as well as some ICT faculty. So that is my role.

LEE YARBOROUGH: Great, thank you, Chrissy.

TEANA FREDEEN: And I'm Teana Fredeen. I'm the operations manager for SynED, and I probably worked with several of you as well, but I've been with SynED for three years now and helping Scott keep us moving forward to help you guys do more with your projects.

LIZ FRAUMANN: And I'm Liz Fraumann. I'm the director of the Cyber Guild program and have been with the company going on two years now and very excited to be part of the group. And I've attended one of these sessions before and found them extremely exciting. I think that Lee and our group have a lot to share today.

[00:04:03] Faculty Support Tools & Resources Focused on Student Success

LEE YARBOROUGH: Great, great. Thank you. So, can everybody see my screen? Are we good to go? Yes, great. OK, so I am here to talk about faculty support tools and then ways we can help you stay focused on student success.

And what we really want today's talk to be about is definitely a conversation. We want to have a discussion with everybody that's on the call. So, feel free, while I'm presenting these slides, to interrupt me, ask a question in the chat. What we're really aiming for today is a discussion to see how we could help you help your students.

So, a little bit of background about SynED is as we help identify the people, processes, and technology to help you achieve your goals and maximize your returns. Our main focus is student career success. So, that means for students having the opportunity to gain the relevant experience, to have the opportunity to showcase their skills and talents, and then be able to analyze and evaluate the outcomes in a safe environment. So, that's really what our main focus is on.

Instructors, administrators and CTE staff are tasked with doing a lot for their students with limited time and resources.

And we know that that you all on this call and hopefully the people that watch this webinar on demand… We know that the instructors, administrators, and CTE staff are tasked to do with a lot of things. That's what we hear from our partners a lot, is that there's not enough time in the day and the week in the school year. So, we know that you're all working really hard with limited time and resources.

By listening to our partners, we have developed the following programs to support faculty with ensuring student success:

- Career Coaching Services
- Digital Credential Design
- Certification Exam Concierge

So, today, we really wanted to focus and share some insight through listening to our partners (so on the community colleges that we work with, the training programs, but focusing on the community colleges). From what we've heard from you all, we have developed different solutions to support you, the faculty, with ensuring student success.

So, through our conversations being at these career expos/conferences, these are the three solutions that most recently we've been really focusing on to ensure student success. So, that's our Career Coaching program, our Digital Credential Design and our Certification Exam Concierge. So, I'll briefly talk about what some schools are doing now and how we're partnering with them. But again, if anything comes to mind that you have a question about, feel free to stop me at any time.

[00:06:26] Solutions = Career Development Model

LEE YARBOROUGH: So, a little bit about my background, I've been a career coach for about 15 years, and I started in Washington, D.C. at the University of District of Columbia in Anacostia. So, my background is in career development for community college students.

And then most recently, since I've been doing career counseling for about 15 years, I really wanted to see the other side. I wanted to see what recruiters are looking for. I could do that research. I could talk to employers on the phone or in person, but I really wanted to take that that chance and be a recruiter myself. So, I'm coming from helping these students from a Career Coaching background, but also from a hiring manager and a recruiting lens

So, SynED, we really look at our solutions and what we can provide through the lens of a career development model. So, you'll see this wheel on the left-hand side, and this is really a lifelong process. This is a lifelong learner. This is continually going. So, if you think about where you are in your career, think about you… Think about how you ended up to be where you are today.

So, when we talk about our Career Coaching, we are really helping the students at each one of these phases—so that assessing themselves, finding out what their interests are, exploring their options, and then moving on to that phase of developing their skills, and this happens in the community college. How do they get practice with their skills in your classroom, with their projects?

And then we move on to that marketing self, that they have to be ready for an interview. How can they present themselves now? Which is really important—what we're seeing is colleges need that virtual component. How do our students successfully interview in a virtual environment?

And then going on to performing, where they're actually like in an apprenticeship or an internship… How do they feel about that job? Are they using their talents? Are they enjoying this? And if not, then you go back to the wheel again, and you start that reassessing yourself.

OK, any questions so far? Am I going too fast or is this OK? OK, good, just checking in.

[00:08:37] Career Coaching Services

LEE YARBOROUGH: OK, so our Career Coaching services, so what we've heard that, here in the community college, there's a lot of back-to-work initiatives and career recovery programs. In the past year, we have seen a lot of students come back to the community colleges because they've lost their jobs, and they want to learn a new skill. They want to apply for a new career.

So, at Santa Barbara City College right now, we are helping them with their career recovery program, where they have designated pathways to help people get back on their feet with employment. What they really needed help was with the job developing piece. They have wonderful student service staff. They have excellent faculty. But the component that they really needed support from us was developing job leads. Who in Santa Barbara is hiring? How can they get their students visible in front of these hiring managers just after learning these new skills?

So, we've been working with their Career Skills Institute, their noncredit program, specifically in the healthcare field. So, with our Personal Care Attendant program, what I've done in my role is I have that connection with the employers, that employer outreach, and then introducing them to the students that are looking for that new job.

OK, so another tool I wanted to mention, if anybody has heard of this, it's a great online tool. It's called Journeys Map, and it's really great for students, especially community college students, that are in that first phase of trying to explore their education, explore career opportunities. So, I would take a chance, if you wanted to check this out for your students, Journeys Map is a really great tool.

And a way to think about it, which I think it resonates with students, is because… A student will look on their phone for the fastest route to Starbucks or the easiest way to get to point B. They developed their exploring options in terms of maps—so in terms of these Journeys. So, as a career coach, this is definitely a tool that that I've seen in community colleges that is getting really great feedback.

So, we have the Job Developer project, and then also a need that we're hearing a lot about is how to prepare students to work in a remote environment. So, the trends of 2021, we know that remote work or hybrid work is here to stay.

So, we've seen that students who have learned these new skills and new careers that we see as career changers, they have about 15 or 20 years of experience in one industry—so, let's say, in the hospitality industry, the restaurant industry—and they're taking these new technical classes, computer classes to change careers.

But what they're missing, the piece that they're missing for that Career Coaching, is how to tell their story, how to tell their story about why they change careers, and then really walk them through the process of all of those transferable skills that they had in their previous industry, how they're going to take that along to this new this new career that they're entering.

So, this is the piece where the one-on-one Career Coaching really is essential and integral for a career changer, because it is… I mean, as you can imagine, if you put yourself in the shoes of somebody who's changing careers after 10 or 15 years, it's very intimidating, right? It's a very intimidating process.

So, the Career Coaching that we see the need in for community colleges is how to tell that story and how to build that student's confidence where, when they go on a virtual interview or they do a phone screening, they reframe their work experience to align with that new industry that they're looking for. Does that make sense so far?

OK, and then another thing that we have seen is from a program that we're working with right now. It focuses on training women in cybersecurity, is providing those specific career workshops that are tailored to cybersecurity. These women have participated in an accelerated, fast-paced training program, but now they need that that extra one-on-one or those workshops about how to write a cybersecurity resume, how to have an online portfolio, how to share the skills that they've learned in their classes, project based, because that's what recruiters and hiring managers in this field are looking for.

They want to see if you have a GitHub account, a portfolio. What projects have you done that contribute to the open source? They want to see evidence of what you've been learning in your classes. So, that's something more industry specific that we help those students and that program develop. How does the student showcase their work in a tangible and an online portfolio way? OK, any questions?

TEANA FREDEEN: I have a couple comments that I just would like to add at this time, since you mentioned several different tools.

LEE YARBOROUGH: Yes. Sure.

TEANA FREDEEN: First off, there's a lot of tools, webinars, training, resources out there for—let's take something like LinkedIn—how to set up a LinkedIn profile. But one of the things we found is the personal touch has really disappeared from our business communities and the colleges. In fact, we're working with a college that we'll talk more about, but they recognize that they don't have the ability to offer that one-on-one personal touch coaching services anymore. And I was talking to somebody from contract ed, Eldon Davidson at El Camino. We were talking about how, in contract ed, they don't have those services.

So, SynED can be a partner to help you with those Career Coaching. And the reason why I mentioned the personal touch is Lee loves to tell us stories about the "I just…" You know? And until you're having that one-on-one conversation with the student, you don't understand their mindset. And the "I just…" is, "Well, I just did this," or, "I was just a waitress," or, "I was just this."

And I love talking to an engineering manager at Booz Allen Hamilton, and he talks about the waitress who, "I just was a waitress," and he gave feedback to Liz and me as part of the Cascade project to tell us that job seekers just don't know how to represent themselves. And yes, you can tell them how to put a GitHub together. You could tell them how to put a LinkedIn.

But until you have that one-on-one personal conversation, you don't know how to teach somebody who was a waitress and a supervisor in a in a restaurant, who read policies and procedures and trained other staff members, how those skillsets and tools can adapt to the Department of Defense of reading contracts and interpreting those contracts out for the rest of the team, the project team.

He was even telling us a story about a military helicopter pilot who's a personal friend of his who said, "Well, I was just a helicopter pilot." And if you think about the critical thinking in the decision making, in the problem solving that goes into 'just' being a helicopter pilot, that's really where SynED likes to work with the individual one-on-one.

And we have a saying in SynED, what drives us, and it's called "Souls Saved Per Day." And we kind of laugh that that's our motto. And at the end of the day, if we're not touching the individual's life and we're not doing something to help that individual get into a career, then we're missing the mark with what our mission is.

So, that personal one-on-one coaching… And Lee especially is the silver star, the gold star on our team of her skillset and her ability to really work with those individuals to catch that "I just" moment and really help them understand that they bring something to the table and everybody has skillsets and everybody has experience, and teaching them how to see themselves with the abilities and skills that they could bring to an environment.

The other thing I wanted to just point out here on Journeys Map… And again, this comes back to Cascade. If you aren't familiar with Cascade, Cascade is the California Advanced Supply Chain Diversification Analysis Effort. I think I mixed up analysis and diversification effort. It's an effort by California governor under a contract with DOD through the federal government to bring cybersecurity resiliency to the defense supply chain.

There are 15 projects in the Cascade 2 program, and one of them was done by the San Diego Cyber Security Center of Excellence. And a couple of things that they've done with Journeys is they've done a tremendous amount of cybersecurity mapping. So, if you haven't had a chance to look on Journeys and go find out if your program is in there, I really encourage you to, because they're trying to make sure, in Journeys, they're mapping all of the programs that are available, as well as doing a work-based learning overlay. So, if you're doing an apprenticeship program or internships or any work-based learning opportunity, we want to make sure we hear about that and get you guys included in it.

But it's free to your students. You can find it on SynED's website. You could go to Journeys directly, you could find it on the San Diego Center of Excellence website or Cyber Center of Excellence, and it's a great tool if you're not using it for your students or pointing your students to it to do their own assessments, list their skills, and find job opportunities as well as education pathways. That's all.

LEE YARBOROUGH: Thanks, Teana. Now, as Teana was talking, there's a community college student that, when I was a recruiter, was interviewing for an internship at our company. And I think this is the piece that Teana is talking about. Of course, he sent his resume in, and he was someone that we called back because he actually had a voicemail that said his name, said who he was, it was a personal voicemail recording. His resume looked great.

He did not have any job experience. He never worked a day in his life, but his professionalism of how he reached out to our team and followed up was impeccable. So, of course, I Googled him. That was my job. I Googled him, and I found that he was this top-ranked gamer in video games, and he had a following. He had his own website. And it's something, when he came in for one-on-one interview, he didn't mention, but because I did my research, I wanted to know about who this candidate was that I was bringing in.

That's something that I think is the missing piece for students we want to know about—about their hobbies, their extracurricular activities. And, if you have a student like that, yes, he's doing on-the-job training. He's competitive. He's working in a collaborative environment. He's showing skill and initiative. But that's something that I had to pull out of him because my nature is Career Coaching.

But he wouldn't have gotten the job, I don't think, if we found that on our own, so I think that's something to highlight to your students, their unique talents and their unique interests—that's what makes them stand out. So, instead of going along with the crowd and making your resume look like every other template that you see online, I think the part of the Career Coaching service that is so important that they're getting in their schools is finding that unique talent that you see in them in the classroom… But giving them the confidence to explain that to an employer or a recruiter or a hiring manager, letting them have that chance to communicate…

STEVE WRIGHT: I just wanted to… It might be better at the end, but I just can't resist. You're talking here on this slide Career Coaching services. Now, these are all services that SynED offers.

LEE YARBOROUGH: Right.

STEVE WRIGHT: And a lot of what you say is stuff that a lot of our faculty on this call will say, 'Well, yeah, I know that, but I don't have time to do that.

LEE YARBOROUGH: Right.

STEVE WRIGHT: So, I just want to make the point that, considering the amount of grant money, Strong Workforce money or whatever is out there, the typical problem is that, yeah, we kind of know what we would do if we could do it, and maybe we can get some money to do it, "But wow, I just I'm just too busy."

And this is where I think the SynED value proposition comes in. As you hear about the expertise that Lee is talking about here and all these areas, keep in the back of your mind that these are things you can contract for, and it takes the burden off of you, and they can be delivered. So, it's not only expertise, but it's the fact that it makes it possible. So, please, continually…

LEE YARBOROUGH: Right.

STEVE WRIGHT: To a certain amount, you're singing to the choir.

LEE YARBOROUGH: Right.

STEVE WRIGHT: And you're adding a lot of expertise and value beyond that, but one of the things I think a lot of people don't realize is, well, if they can get a grant directed toward this, then they can probably get it done.

LEE YARBOROUGH: Right. And what we've seen that some programs are doing and is kind of a good, that it's working out really well so far, is they'll give a student through us a Career Coaching voucher or a coupon for a certain number of hours or a service. That way, the faculty or the program administrator gives that student a coupon, and we have a code, so we know if the student makes an appointment with SynED, with our career coaches. And if not, we can use that coupon code for another student, so we're ensuring that that Career Coaching piece is going to be utilized by a student, and if not, we're going to make sure that another student gets that time with one of our career coaches.

STEVE WRIGHT: Well, this is good. I hope I'm not jumping ahead, but I'm looking at the next slide…

LEE YARBOROUGH: That's OK.

[00:23:14] Digital Credential Design

LEE YARBOROUGH: We can go through this quickly. But also, digital credentials—

STEVE WRIGHT: [inaudible] "How do I do digital badges?" And this is this is one way.

LEE YARBOROUGH: Yes, yes. So, Digital Credential Design… As a recruiter, when I would see a digital credential on an applicant's LinkedIn profile, I loved it because I'm able to click on that badge. I'm able to see what that earner did. I'm able to see proof of their outcomes. I'm able to see their whole transcript in a click of a button.

So, we've worked with the Career Skills Institute at Santa Barbara City College, and I think that the piece that really stands out for this Digital Credential Design program is the employer outreach, not only the outreach to see what are their students going to be hired if they have this badge. That engagement with the partners in the community were instrumental in designing the badges.

But then after the badges were implemented for a couple of years, they worked with SynED. They worked with us to go back to those employers and say, "Is this working? Do we need to change our curriculum? Are these the skills that you're still looking for?" It was that continual assessment will that, "Great! We designed these badges. And great! Our students are earning them, but are they still of value two or three years later?"

That continual improvement process is what really makes the relationship between the earner— so, the student who's earning the badge—the viewer… Who's going to review this badge? You want to make sure it's hitting those marks. If they want to hire Santa Barbara city college student, we want to make sure that the skills are aligned.

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And then for the college, for the faculty, to make sure that this is an important piece of their curriculum…. So, we have we worked with Santa Barbara City College, College of the Canyons, and that was a different need. Each college has a different need for their Digital Credential Design. They really wanted us to help them research the platforms. Not all digitally digital credential platforms are the same, so they really wanted to take the time and be deliberate to see. "We want to make sure this platform makes sense for our students, makes sense for our faculty, and it's something that we can have a relationship with down the road." So, that research and that component, again, Steve, they didn't have time to do that, right? So, we really put our researching abilities to find out what makes sense for College of the Canyons.

And Ventura Community College, they have a credential program just for their advanced manufacturing department. And those digital badges that they designed in recommendations from us were more of stepping stones, so they were more built inside a class as a student motivator to highlight student participation.

So, it really depends on the colleges. You want to ask the why: "Why digital badges for your students, for your college?" And then SynED will definitely help you. It has to be an ecosystem. It has to make sense for your students, your community, your location. Chrissy, is there anything that you want to add that we're working with any people?

CHRISSY YBARRA: I would just add that we just started one from Moreno Valley Unified School District as a whole for their cybersecurity pathway. So, the digital badges are going to align with their pathway, but they're also going to make sure that they have measured those against the metrics of what employers are looking for. So, they've done it at a high school level because they want those to be transferable, both to college or to an employer.

And they started at something that we do at SynED—it's called compression planning. So, they started with a planning session where they brought all of their key stakeholders to the table, and through that quick strategic planning session, they're going to design what they want their outcomes to be.

LEE YARBOROUGH: Right.

CHRISSY YBARRA: So, SynED is not a badge platform, but what we helped do is make sure that they're aligning both to what your needs are in the classroom, what the outcomes are of the end of the classroom, but also what employers are looking for.

LEE YARBOROUGH: Right.

CHRISSY YBARRA: So, I think that that's the part in digital badges that you want it to have rigor for the classroom, but you also want it to have merit for an employer.

LEE YARBOROUGH: Right.

CHRISSY YBARRA: So, it's balancing those two and making sure that you are really… As a program, you're hitting the mark. And that's really what SynED offers, is that making sure that we've met with everybody, that everybody has a voice, and really working that ecosystem, like you said.

LEE YARBOROUGH: Right, yes.

STEVE WRIGHT: Well, it's a consultative approach that you take.

LEE YARBOROUGH: Yeah.

STEVE WRIGHT: I'm glad you brought up—

LEE YARBOROUGH: Everybody is different.

CHRISSY YBARRA: Right, right.

STEVE WRIGHT: Credential planning, because that is something I know a lot of people, the community college system have been trained on. But now with COVID and everything, it's very difficult to do it. Besides, if you don't do it regularly, you forget how to do it.

CHRISSY YBARRA: Yeah, Lee and I both went through virtual compression planning, retraining, so we can do it from the comfort of your own home, and using some online tools that can help keep everybody still really engaged.

STEVE WRIGHT: Well, I was chatting to Lee at the ICT Winter Conference because you guys had a booth there, and the idea that you could do compression planning virtually... I mean, we're all getting bombarded with Zoom calls.

LEE YARBOROUGH: Right.

STEVE WRIGHT: How productive are they? So, if you could do a Zoom call that's also compression planning and you were able to capture a consensus and alternatives that make sense and can be bought into, that's an incredible opportunity right now. You guys offer that as well, right?

CHRISSY YBARRA: We do. We do. Lee?

LEE YARBOROUGH: Yes. So, yes. Yes.

CHRISSY YBARRA: One of the other things I think is really exciting about the digital badges is you can also have them map to industry standards. So, when you look at the cybersecurity realm specifically, they can map to NICE and to NIST. And I'm guessing that that's the same kind of thing in the medical area as well. So, you can hit the college requirements, the employer requirements, and the industry requirements.

LEE YARBOROUGH: Right.

CHRISSY YBARRA: And I think that makes it really, really a strong opportunity for everyone to have.

LEE YARBOROUGH: Yes. So, what we're hearing from the colleges is, when we're talking about time, limited time and resources, with the community colleges that we're working with, it's the employer outreach and making sure, doing that work beforehand, and then in the middle and after. So, that's where we see that your staff and your faculty don't have the time to make...

To not make their relationships, but maintain the relationships with the employers. When you think about maintaining your network for someone that's looking for a job, that's what takes time. So, I think that

that's the piece that that we hear that, yes, they would love help with the employer outreach, employee satisfaction. How do we align the two?

STEVE WRIGHT: Please go forward, this is great.

[00:30:36] Certification Exam Concierge
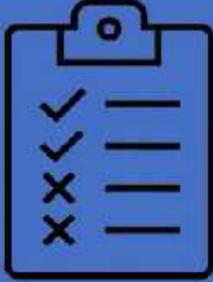
LEE YARBOROUGH: OK, OK, so now, the Certification Exam Concierge… So, we've been hearing from our college partners that many students that are in their classes failed to take the exams. Why? Well, why do we think that's happening? And if it happens in your classes, they go through the classes, but there's that missing piece—they'd all either sign up for the exam… Teana, feel free to jump in. But if there's anything… This is what we're hearing. So, we developed this new service—or not new service anymore, but a Certification Exam Concierge.

TEANA FREDEEN: This is really another example of a solution that has come out of our relationship in partnership with the colleges. And we've heard from all of you guys as well as CompTIA. I think CompTIA says that less than 20%… And just recently, we talked to CompTIA earlier this week. It's now right about 20% translation right between the classroom and exam taking. So, only 20% of students who complete a course for a certification such as Security+, Network+, A+, whatever it might be, only 20% go on to actually get their exam certification.

And we know that industry recognized certifications is one of the metrics for the community colleges, and out of that conversations that we've had, we've started and launched an exam concierge service, and we've talked to several instructors from Sacramento to the Central Coast to the Inland Empire. We've talked to several faculty members that talk about how, students have... One, they don't feel ready. They don't feel the confidence. Perhaps they don't feel that they're technically ready, so they need more work. They maybe have just life things, challenges, or they don't find a value in doing it, and I know the faculty are preaching to the students about that value of those certifications.

So, just like our career counseling services, you can basically give your students a coupon to do a concierge service with SynED that once they are finished with their coursework with you, we handhold them through the process of getting prepared and ready to actually scheduling and taking their exam.

And that can include the voucher. And we do not release the voucher until we've had a one-on-one conversation and assess that they're emotionally ready and committed to taking the exam, and then we release the voucher to them once they have an exam date set.

So, it kind of helps to increase that performance in those metrics, and we have a great relationship with CompTIA. Unfortunately, we haven't been able to get success with Cisco or AWS or Microsoft yet. But with CompTIA, for any of the vouchers we purchase, we're able to run the reports and get the pass/fail rates, so we can report them back anonymously on a classroom or program basis to show you the success of your program.

[00:34:00] Let's Discuss!

TEANA FREDEEN: We're going to talk a little bit about funding, but the concierge and exams and vouchers is really a good place to talk about funding. I had a conversation with Mary Kim at Coastline a couple of weeks ago because a lot of the faculty and colleges are doing incredible outreach programs with your high school partners and your high school feeder schools, for CompTIA, for Cyber Patriot, etc.

And we have some programs like Cypress—some of their students are getting 10 certifications before graduation, and they're doing an incredible job. But there's always the issue about grant funding, and I spoke to a lawyer who's with ACTE, and she told me that you can get funding to fund vouchers, but it's how you word the grant funding is really key.

So, Perkins Funding, [inaudible 00:35:03] funds, even the CARES Act funds, Strong Workforce. I know the Chancellor's Office says that you can't do vouchers, but the way that you word it for your program and for your grant programs is by saying that the students getting the industry certification is a measure of success of your program. A side benefit is that the students gain an industry certification, but it's a measure of your program's success by students being able to get issued industry certification, especially if you're able to make the certification exam part of the program.

The other conversation we've had with faculty is making the cost of the exam voucher—and even the concierge service—part of the cost of the class. And it raises the cost of the class, but the benefit of doing that is students can use financial aid to pay for their certification, and you kind of change your focus from just educating to educating and validating your student's success with giving that exam certification.

And we'd love to hear your feedback and response, and if anybody else has creative ideas on how they've done their funding for industry-recognized certifications, this is a time to speak up.

STEVE WRIGHT: I think that's terrific, Teana. And the thing is, I know it's going to be different probably at every college, every grant thing, but the ability that you have to report the metrics is critical. Right now,

everybody who's been issued Strong Workforce funds is being hit with a requirement now to come back and report on their results, and they're all going, "What?"

So, any time you spend money on a program where it comes as a package deal, it's going to report the results. It's something that people are going to start thinking about going, "Maybe I should think about that going in—how well am I going to be able to report when I'm done?"

And I like this concierge's approach because it does kind of… I hear words like comingle and hide and obfuscate. But I mean, you can take the voucher thing and make it an extraneous category to the whole purpose of what you're doing. The purpose is fundable, so that's… Don't want to be too clever here, but there's a way to help these students. And I like the way you designed it and the flexibility that you put into it, because that's what… We've learned over the years there aren't too many alternatives here. Pretty much, it has to be a holistic counseling support approach.

From some of the chat, I see that student confidence like critical, and a lot of what you guys emphasize is this human touch, and I think that's so, so important. Sorry to interrupt. I couldn't help myself. Thank you.

TEANA FREDEEN: We'd love to hear from others. I guess it's Trevor saying that a lot of the majority of students are focused more on getting their letter grade of the class rather than absorbing the content. But as we know, in IT and cyber security, we are seeing…

I was on the phone last week with somebody who was saying they have two students with master's degrees in cybersecurity that cannot get a job, and they're lacking the certifications. So, getting a job in cybersecurity requires the degree, the certifications, and experience.

And the degree requirements are going away. In fact, Liz was just talking to me about Booz Allen Hamilton, because when we talked to the hiring manager at Booz Allen Hamilton earlier last year, degrees were really critical. And now, as part of the Aspen Group and the 31 companies that have signed an agreement… If you haven't heard of that, you can look it up, but the Aspen Cybersecurity Group have 31 companies, including Facebook, Northrop Grumman… I think Apple might be on there, Raytheon… Some of the big, huge companies in America have signed an agreement to lessen the requirements and focus on skills rather than degrees.

So, the degree is going to go away, but that skillset has to have the certification required, and that's really key and important to emphasize that to the students. And I know, like I said, the faculty we work with, I know you guys are preaching that to the students, but… And maybe Steve, through his resources, can give you some good tools, or SynED could give you some good tools showing these statistics, the labor market statistics. And you'll hear from Robert Half in a couple of weeks later in February about the importance of certifications in IT and cyber.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I want to give a little feedback. I'm from Santa Monica College, and for a little while, it took me time for me to get funding. And I'm doing it for QuickBooks because I know QuickBooks is very important for the industry, and we started with that.

And believe it or not, when I do teach the students even how to pass the tests and everything, everything that comes with it, this was the first year that the college gave us some funding where I can actually get it for my students for free. And I imagine…

I was so happy, and I started contacting anybody from the past, anybody from the present. And for my shock, I only got about maybe 10 students because they don't see the value, and of course, some of my students, of course, they already have bachelor's degrees. Some of them have master's, but still they do not understand that even…

You know, things change. There's a lot of people who lost their jobs, and right now, it's going to hit them when they're trying to go and look for a job and sometimes even to be interviewed.

LEE YARBOROUGH: Anyone else have a story?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: And this will help them to go into the industry easily, but it was shocking. It has been shocking, but I still have six more months to recruit so that we can use all those vouchers, because that's the number one thing that I have.

I'm giving them QuickBooks online and QuickBooks desktop, so we can capture both, but it is hard, and they're ready. It's just that… And even I tell them, "You can tell me what date you want to take that test," because the advantage is that they now have what is a take this test from home, which I can monitor the test from home, so it makes it even easier for them to take the test, but there are not that many students who are jumping in. And I was shocked because I tell them, "That voucher is $150 that you don't have—take advantage," but they're not jumping.

LEE YARBOROUGH: Right. So, from some of the students that I've heard that I've talked with that are taking their… It's a Security+ certification. They want to wait until they get a certain score on the practice test, and that's the confidence piece that Trevor mentioned.

So, when you when you talk about confidence, the more you delay something or you don't take action, you have that analysis paralysis. So, maybe the students are stuck. They don't want to make that choice. They know they should take that QuickBooks certification, but when they don't have a deadline, that time frame, you get stuck in that decision making process where you stall.

So, I'm wondering if maybe that's that confidence piece that we've been talking about—you get stuck in that analysis paralysis. "I'm just going to wait another week," or you're searching for that perfection, and perfection leads to procrastination, right? I mean, I think we all probably have an occurrence of that. But yes, if you're waiting to get a perfect score, you're going to procrastinate, right?

???: And I tell them, "Look, if you take the test and you fail, don't worry about it. You can take it again. You're not going to pay." So, most of them right now, I will say almost 95% of my students pass the tests. And that's the thing—unless they take it, they won't know. And even I tell them, "The first time that I took it, even though I was new into this, I failed, and it was OK. I just wanted to see how it was."

LEE YARBOROUGH: Right.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: And the next time I took it, since I knew what was the content. Then, of course, I got 100%, but I said, "You need to take it. Otherwise, you don't know that you're going to pass."

LEE YARBOROUGH: Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: But I hear you.

LEE YARBOROUGH: Yes. No, I hear you too, I guess, and it's hard to just try to coach someone: "Just take action. You'd have to do it, and if you fail, then you learn from that experience."

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes. Thank you.

STEVE WRIGHT: You know, one bit of information I'd love to see surface on today's call… And I see Suzanne Mata is here, and I'm going to put her on the spot in a second if I can. And that is—what is it like as a college to work with SynED? If you start with, "Gee, I want to do something and talk to you guys," then do help through the process of getting to a proposal to getting something done?

I mean, I think a lot of… Just like the students have a hard time doing CompTIA certification test, we have a lot of faculty and administrators that have a hard time putting in a proposal for a grant to do something because that sounds like more work. And perhaps Suzanne Mata can tell us what it's like to work with you guys. I see she's there! Thank you, Suzanne.

SUZANNE: Hi, everyone. It's wonderful to work with SynED. They have been such a blessing to me and helped me so much in my region. I take advantage of the Strong Workforce program, so I have multiple projects, and that can be a little overwhelming sometimes when it's just me, and I have one professional expert [inaudible 00:45:34] that helps me, but there's a lot of work that goes into those projects.

So, when I work with SynED… And I have all of this expertise that you're seeing here, all of these wonderful personalities with something different that they all bring to the table, and they're just able to really help me to prioritize and to break everything down into specific activities and outcomes that we can accomplish together, so it's really been a great help and benefit to me.

They've helped me to spend… My program's done large contracts with SynED, but we've broken it down by projects and, like I said, it really helped me to get the activities completed that I needed to complete in my region. We did compression planning, which helped to really identify goals and priorities. We've involved our colleges, and it's helped me to build stronger relationships and partnerships with my colleges and my faculty. So, just all around, it's been an excellent experience.

STEVE WRIGHT: That's good. I'm so glad to hear that because, like I said back at the beginning, I remember talking with Scott and Guy, and I was like, "Colleges want to do things, and there's money, but nobody has the time." Nobody has, like, that little bit of expertise to know how to deal with employers. And Lee, I mean, your outreach to employers and that sort of thing… Somebody has to be able to speak their language and talk to them, and I don't know of anybody on community college payroll has time to do that. So, this ad hoc funding that comes in occasionally is something to take advantage of, and it's nice to know that you guys are there. Any other questions from the group this morning?

TEANA FREDEEN: I was just going to say, Steve, if nobody has a question, we get asked to do all kinds of things, and the regional directors have been awesome with bringing us opportunities where they need help. Whether that's Suzanne or Paula, we do a lot with those regions, with Wendy, with Marcus. We used to work a lot with Steve Linthicum, and Steve Linthicum today is still telling colleges, "Call SynED—they'll help you fix this problem," and sometimes the problem is a simple hiring issue.

You know, "We want to hire faculty for this situation, but we have this challenge with how to do the paperwork and hiring," and we've done simple things like just taking over the management of H.R. and payroll for faculty. Sometimes it's more involved, like we can help you write the proposal, your regional proposal, your Strong Workforce program proposal, to provide the extra services you need to help you do your projects.

So, we do a lot of different things. We know the funding structures are really changing. I mentioned Coastline before and the high schools, because Coastline has been funding, and a lot of your colleges have been funding support for K-12, and that that funding is going away. So, how do you keep your outreach programs with your feeder schools with it being more difficult to get it? And how do you sustain it?

And that's where our advisement is looking at what schools… What Donna Woods is doing at Moreno Valley [inaudible 00:48:54], and we've what we learned from other K-12 schools, Sacramento County Office of Education, when we work with a lot to actually use the Perkins and the tech funds to help them fund a lot of that activity themselves, rather than relying on the Strong Workforce program community college funds for that.

So, just some things to think about, and we're really big on cyber competitions. We love competitions, so we're working with a couple of the regions right now to take the California Mayor's Cyber Cup and really make it a regional event that they own, and we're supporting them in those efforts, but also building a sustainability model, so it can continue year after year.

STEVE WRIGHT: Yeah, you've done incredible work with the cyber competitions that Mayor's Cup was just a wonderful project for a lot of people, and now we have to figure out how to do things with all this COVID environment. All right.

STEVE WRIGHT: Well, looking at the chat, I don't see any more questions at the moment. I hope everybody today has got a good feel for what SynED is about and what they could do. And of course, this entire presentation is recorded. It'll be edited and transcribed and put on our website. That's where you can share with those people who couldn't make it. And as I said before, that turns out to be like a huge part of our audience, is people who watch it afterwards and hear about it. And I appreciate the work that SynED has done and all the professionalism that comes to the table. And believe me, the community colleges need help like what you provide. So, I'd like to thank all of our speakers today and our audience and have a good week.

LEE YARBOROUGH: Thanks, Steve.

TEANA FREDEEN: Thank you.

LEE YARBOROUGH: Take care.