

Strong Workforce Stars Recognition

Community college career education programs advancing economic & social mobility

News Media Fact Sheet

What is “Strong Workforce Stars”?

California Community Colleges Strong Workforce Stars, launched in 2017, is an annual recognition and celebration for career education programs, also known as career technical education, whose students show significant gains in factors important for advancing social mobility – a substantial increase in earnings, attainment of a living wage and a job closely matched with the field of study. College programs may receive recognition at one of three levels: Bronze Stars, Silver Stars, and Gold Stars, depending on how many of three outcomes thresholds they meet.

Who is eligible to be named a Strong Workforce Star?

Career education programs within the California Community Colleges system are eligible for recognition. The programs encompass a wide range of sectors that support California’s economic growth, such as advanced manufacturing; advanced transportation and logistics; agriculture, water and environmental technologies; business and entrepreneurship; education and human development; energy, construction and utilities; global trade; health; information and communications technologies/digital media; life sciences and biotech; public safety; and retail, hospitality and tourism.

How many Strong Workforce Stars are recognized each year?

The number of programs recognized each year depends upon the number of programs that meet the established criteria. In 2018, there were 114 Gold Star programs, 294 Silver Star programs and 975 Bronze Star programs. All 114 colleges in the California Community College system have at least one program receiving recognition.

How does Strong Workforce Stars align with California’s efforts to close the skills gap?

Strong Workforce Stars is an output of the Strong Workforce Program, an annual recurring investment of \$200 million to spur career education in California Community Colleges, the nation’s largest workforce development system, with 114 colleges. The Strong Workforce Program is a bold step California took in 2016 to create 1 million more middle-skilled workers, thereby producing a job-ready workforce for employers and lifting low-wage workers into living-wage jobs.

Why is the Strong Workforce Stars program important to the effort?

Career education programs are critical to advancing social mobility and economic outcomes locally, regionally and statewide. The Strong Workforce Stars recognition program allows the California Community Colleges to honor standout programs and highlight their effective practices so they can be replicated elsewhere in the state.