Professional Development for Institutional Effectiveness:
Understanding Impact and Building on Strengths

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Executive Summary

The Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative (IEPI) is a collaborative effort of the California Community Colleges (CCC) to advance the colleges’ success by improving fiscal viability, reducing accreditation sanctions and audit issues, boosting student performance and outcomes, and increasing programmatic compliance with state and federal guidelines. Through IEPI, the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO) and its partners offer professional development workshops and online resources for CCC faculty, staff, and administrators.

This report provides a high level overview of IEPI professional development efforts and shares the experiences of IEPI participants since Spring 2016, when the Education Insights Center (EdInsights), an education research and policy center located at California State University, Sacramento, began its evaluation study. This report focuses primarily on the two professional development workshops that EdInsights researchers assessed over the summer and fall of 2016 and the ongoing development of the Professional Learning Network (PLN) website. During this time, researchers also observed the development of new online professional learning resources on integrated planning and data disaggregation and new professional development workshops on financial aid, dual enrollment, and guided pathways. We discuss usage and interest in IEPI resources, how well IEPI professional development workshops covered state priorities identified by the legislature, the key strengths of the initiative, and how IEPI leadership can make improvements by building on these strengths.

Use and interest in IEPI professional development resources. Participants in IEPI professional development workshops came from most of the community colleges across the state and represented a wide range of roles and functions, including faculty, staff, institutional researchers, institutional planners, and student services providers. Interest in IEPI resources was high, as shown by near capacity attendance at workshops, and survey respondents indicated they would like to attend future IEPI events. Interest in the PLN grew, too, as the resources available on the web portal increased.

IEPI’s focus on state priorities. IEPI workshops across topics (inmate education and basic skills) supported the four statewide IEPI goals to advance college success. Survey respondents anticipated positive impact in terms of action taken as a direct result of training. Respondents noted that they were in the beginning stages of developing new programs and were focused on gaining stakeholder buy-in and building collaborative efforts. They consistently cited resistance to change and insufficient time and resources as their biggest challenges. However, they believed additional IEPI support in understanding how to manage implementation and facilitate change would help them overcome these obstacles and achieve results.

IEPI’s key strengths and recommendations for building on these strengths. Through our research, we identified four key strengths that will support the initiative’s success, and we describe how, in the next year, IEPI leadership could build on these strengths:

- **Close the feedback loop.** IEPI leadership, staff, and resource providers actively solicited and incorporated stakeholder input, which not only allowed the initiative to effectively address the needs of the colleges, but also ensured that the colleges were engaged in the
initiative. Initiative leaders should communicate to stakeholders that they appreciate and understand how useful and critical their voices and feedback are to the initiative.

- **Continue focus on outcomes.** Designing and evaluating programs for outcomes ensures that resources align with IEPI goals and promotes the conscientious assessment of those resources. Resource providers should continue this focus by identifying learning outcomes early, sharing them broadly, and reflecting on how they impact IEPI goals.

- **Support team building and action planning.** The focus on supporting team building and action planning promotes the likelihood that changes will happen across a campus, and with fidelity. Resource providers should increase this support by adding to each workshop change management skill building and structured time for action planning.

- **Promote collaboration and integration.** Just as IEPI supports collaborative action in the colleges, the initiative itself will achieve greater results when the providers engaged in creating learning resources are not working in silos. IEPI leaders should continue to encourage strategies for integration across professional development activities.

**Evaluation strategy for understanding IEPI’s impact.** EdInsights researchers created an evaluation plan that allows for the assessment of IEPI professional development activities at the resource level, the college level, and the system level. This plan assists IEPI staff in building a greater understanding of the actions and impacts of the resources developed and of how to continually improve them.

As IEPI matures, the initiative’s leadership has begun reflecting on its processes, practices, and outcomes and is looking forward to understanding impact and making adjustments to improve. We commend IEPI leadership and staff for creating an initiative to improve institutional effectiveness that clearly focuses on IEPI goals, for actively listening to their stakeholders, and for nimbly moving to address community colleges’ changing or unaddressed needs for improving institutional effectiveness. In the upcoming year, IEPI leadership should build on its strengths by closing the feedback loop with stakeholders, maintaining its focus on outcomes, supporting team building and action planning, and promoting collaboration and integration across initiative activities.
The Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative (IEPI) is a collaborative effort of the California Community Colleges (CCC) to advance the colleges’ success by improving fiscal viability, reducing accreditation sanctions and audit issues, boosting student performance and outcomes, and increasing programmatic compliance with state and federal guidelines.

Through IEPI, the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO) and its partners offer peer-based technical support through Partnership Resource Teams (PRTs), a menu of professional development workshops, and the Professional Learning Network (PLN) that offers online resources for CCC faculty, staff, and administrators. The Education Insights Center (EdInsights) is evaluating IEPI’s professional development workshops and the PLN. EdInsights, formerly the Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy (IHELP), is a research and policy center at California State University, Sacramento, that is devoted to student success in K-12 and broad-access public postsecondary education, particularly for underserved student populations.

This report focuses on IEPI efforts since Spring 2016, when EdInsights began its evaluation study. It includes analyses from:
- the professional development workshops from the summer of 2016
- the PLN since its launch in April 2016.

In the summer of 2016, IEPI sponsored two professional development workshops, while continuing to update and refine the PLN website. IEPI also supported the development of new professional development resources, including integrated planning, data disaggregation, and enrollment management resources for the PLN, and professional development workshops on financial aid, dual enrollment, and guided pathways.

The focus of this report is the key components of the EdInsights evaluation study that are of greatest interest to state legislators, including:
- the level of demand for and interest in IEPI professional development activities;
- the extent to which learning outcomes for these activities support IEPI’s legislatively-mandated statewide priorities;
- the extent to which professional development activities support colleges in action planning;
- key strengths in IEPI’s approach to delivering professional development activities that support successful IEPI outcomes; and
- how we plan to measure impact in the medium and long term.

For detailed information on each of the workshops evaluated, please request an evaluation report from Ronnie Slimp (rslimp@cccco.edu) at the Chancellor’s Office.
Interest in IEPI Professional Development Activities

SUMMER 2016 WORKSHOPS SERVED 336 PARTICIPANTS FROM 91 COLLEGES OR DISTRICTS. ALMOST 3,200 USERS REGISTERED ON THE PLN (AS OF AUGUST 31, 2016).

Through the professional development workshops and the Professional Learning Network website, IEPI professional development activities reached individuals at most, if not all, of the California Community Colleges. Moreover, participants in the workshops indicated that, based on their experience in the workshop, they would like to use IEPI resources in the future.

THE BROAD REACH OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

The professional development workshops evaluated during Summer 2016 reached 336 individuals from 91 colleges:

- 73 participants from 34 colleges attended the two IEPI Inmate Education Training Workshops in June 2016.
- 263 participants attended the IEPI Basic Skills Summit in August 2016, representing 62 of 64 colleges that received Basic Skills and Student Outcomes Transformation Program grants.

Additional users were reached through the PLN:

- 3197 users registered on the PLN since its launch in April 2016.
- 575 of those users created profiles on Grovo.com, and 1,228 users developed profiles on Lynda.com. These online learning platforms provide libraries of professional development resources and trainings.

Faculty, staff, and administrators serving various functions on campus (such as instruction, student services, and research and planning) all utilized these professional development resources.

HIGH INTEREST IN USING IEPI RESOURCES IN THE FUTURE

Based on respondents’ positive experiences in the Inmate Education Training Workshops and the Basic Skills Summit, a majority expressed interest in attending future IEPI professional development workshops and in accessing information or tools on the PLN. Many respondents indicated that they would like to have an IEPI Partnership Resource Team (PRT) at their college, and a slightly smaller percentage, but still roughly a third, of respondents were interested in serving on a PRT at another college. The remaining respondents typically selected “not sure,” rather than “no,” when asked about their interest in having a visit from or serving on a PRT team. Further outreach and publicity about the benefits of IEPI professional learning and technical support may be helpful to sway those respondents who were undecided.

GROWING INTEREST IN THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING NETWORK

Since its launch in April 2016, interest has been growing in the PLN, an online clearinghouse of effective practices, trainings, and other resources. The addition of the online learning platform Lynda.com contributed greatly to increasing PLN registrations and website use in the last few months. When Lynda.com went live on August 1, the PLN had about 1,100 registered users. By the end of the month, an additional 2,000 users had registered on the site. Almost
40 percent of PLN users also visited Lynda.com. Further custom resources for the CCC are under development.

**IEPI WORKSHOPS SUPPORTED IEPI STATEWIDE GOALS**

As part of the design of the workshops, IEPI identified what participants should learn as a result of attendance. Ideally, these workshop-specific learning outcomes support the four overall IEPI goals. Workshops focused on certain IEPI goals more than others, as illustrated in the table above. The workshops held in the summer of 2016 primarily supported the IEPI goals of improving student performance and increasing regulatory compliance. Consistent with the four IEPI goals, survey respondents who attended the Inmate Education Training Workshops found the workshops quite useful or extremely useful for learning about regulatory compliance and for improving student performance (63% and 61% of respondents, respectively). These findings were consistent with the workshop-specific goals of increasing understanding of state and federal regulations related to inmate education and of developing educational programs to improve outcomes for incarcerated students. Secondarily, respondents found workshops useful for the IEPI goals of improving fiscal viability and reducing accreditation sanctions (50% and 53% of respondents, respectively).

Basic Skills Summit respondents found the summit quite useful or extremely useful for the IEPI goal of improving student performance (60% of respondents). This was consistent with the summit’s primary focus on helping colleges be successful in implementing their Basic Skills and Student Outcomes Transformation Program grants. Summit-specific goals of deepening understanding of integrated planning for fiscal sustainability, state rules and regulations, and grant reporting requirements supported the IEPI goals of improving fiscal viability and increasing compliance, although respondents found the summit less useful for supporting these IEPI goals.

Every CCC must develop college-specific targets for the IEPI goals. Most workshop respondents were familiar with their college’s IEPI targets. In both workshops, about half of respondents were quite familiar or extremely familiar, about a quarter were moderately familiar, and the remaining quarter were slightly familiar or not at all familiar.
IEPI WORKSHOPS SUPPORTED ACTION PLANNING

EdInsights’ surveys included questions about how what participants learned in the IEPI workshops would change their practices on campus, what impact that change would have, what obstacles they anticipated, and what support IEPI could provide to overcome those obstacles. While the workshops offered in the summer had distinctly different topics and target audiences, common themes emerged. Respondents noted the following:

- Gaining stakeholder buy-in and building collaboration are crucial to long-term success.
- Obstacles include resistance to change and insufficient time/resources.
- Future support should focus on managing implementation and facilitating change.

GAINING STAKEHOLDER BUY-IN AND BUILDING COLLABORATION SEEN AS CRUCIAL TO LONG-TERM SUCCESS

Respondents in both the Inmate Education Training Workshops and Basic Skills Summit were at the beginning stages of developing new educational programs. They were focused on gaining the stakeholder buy-in necessary to launch and expand programs, as well as on improving collaboration and communication across their campuses and with partnering organizations. Once programs were in place, the respondents anticipated improved student success. They described the critical role of buy-in and coordination:

“My hope is that word would spread amongst faculty in regard to the false misconceptions of teaching at a prison, which would help with more faculty willing to teach at the prison, which would ultimately lead to better classes and teaching experiences for our students.”
—Inmate Education Training Workshop respondent

“Before the summit, we had already discussed the need for a common vision among the various committees on campus. We now know even more how important this coordination will be and are geared up to make it happen.”
—Basic Skills Summit respondent

OBSTACLES INCLUDED RESISTANCE TO CHANGE AND INSUFFICIENT TIME AND RESOURCES

When asked about obstacles, respondents most frequently cited concerns about overcoming resistance to change within their own institutions. One respondent’s comment mirrored the sentiment of many of the comments received:

“Our college is very slow to change, in general, and currently has many obstacles in place that prevent effective long-term professional development activities for adjunct faculty in basic skills areas. Unless we find ways of incentivizing these activities for adjunct faculty, we are concerned about scaling up our successful programs.”
—Basic Skills Summit respondent

Respondents also expressed concerns regarding having sufficient time and resources to make change:

“This kind of program will require quite a bit of administrative coordination at the onset (and ongoing), and I don’t know what (if any) funding is available for getting started. While there is the opportunity to earn more apportionment, I definitely got the impression at this workshop that this kind of program may not be economically advantageous for the institution.”
—Inmate Education Training Workshop respondent
“The short time frame [is an obstacle]. Three years is a short period to drastically change policies and procedures on assessment and placement that have been around for many years.”
—Basic Skills Summit respondent

“I am worried that the faculty and administration who are tasked with doing this work are already overextended and suffering from initiative fatigue.”
—Basic Skills Summit respondent

FUTURE SUPPORT SHOULD FOCUS ON MANAGING IMPLEMENTATION AND FACILITATING CHANGE

To address the obstacles of resistance to change and a lack of time and resources, respondents across workshops requested that future professional development include a focus on strategies for managing implementation and facilitating change.

 “[We need additional support for] team work, integrated planning, dealing with resistance, collaboration across groups, institutional change/reform, and setting and implementing a vision. The summit focused on student-oriented topics (assessment, curriculum, instruction, tutoring), and these topics are all VERY important. Still, many of the challenges happen behind the scenes between college employees. How do people with different experiences and interests work together to change the way a college serves its students?”
—Basic Skills Summit respondent

IEPI leadership and staff continually refined IEPI processes for the development of professional development resources and activities. Based on staff and stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and observations, IEPI leadership and staff demonstrated four key strengths:

- soliciting and incorporating input from stakeholders to better meet their needs;
- identifying resource-specific learning outcomes as part of program development and evaluation;
- designing learning activities that support team building and action planning; and
- promoting collaboration and integration across the initiative.
Four Key Strengths Supporting IEPI Effectiveness and Success

SOLICITING AND INCORPORATING STAKEHOLDER INPUT

IEPI leadership, staff, and resource providers thoughtfully created and integrated processes for soliciting input and feedback from their stakeholders and intended audiences. IEPI sponsored a visioning meeting for stakeholders in April 2016, with another scheduled for November 2016. A workgroup comprising stakeholders across the community college system meets bi-monthly to provide feedback to IEPI leadership and staff and engage in the continuing development of the initiative. A newly-launched initiative website and regular electronic newsletters keep stakeholders informed of initiative activities. Attendees of professional development events are surveyed, with feedback incorporated to improve future workshops. IEPI leadership also works collaboratively with partner organizations and constituent groups, including the IEPI Executive Committee, the IEPI Advisory Committee and the Professional Development Workgroup, the Academic Senate of the California Community Colleges, the California Community College Success Network (3CSN), Telecommunications and Technology Infrastructure Program South (TTIP South), and the Research and Planning (RP) Group, to ensure that relevant knowledge in the field is being leveraged to understand and meet learning needs. In engaging EdInsights as an evaluator, IEPI leadership also demonstrated its commitment to obtaining feedback from an independent source, and to undertaking an evaluation approach that is focused on understanding IEPI’s internal processes, as well as its short- and long-term impacts in relation to IEPI goals.

DESIGNING AND EVALUATING FOR OUTCOMES

To support effective program design and evaluation, IEPI leadership actively pushed resource providers to explicitly elucidate learning outcomes for their professional development activities. This focus on learning outcomes clarified the connection between the specific activity and the larger IEPI goals, and facilitated the evaluation of how well the activity was achieving these outcomes. The provider for the Inmate Education Training Workshops, the first workshops to incorporate this practice, identified learning outcomes after the program had been designed. For the Basic Skills Summit, the provider identified learning outcomes as part of the program development process and used them to inform the design of activities. For example, the program included specific activities to support learning outcomes related to college team formation and planning, which were among the highest rated learning outcomes. Early articulation of outcomes also provided a way to familiarize presenters who were not involved in program development with the intended learning outcomes.

SUPPORTING TEAM BUILDING AND ACTION PLANNING

IEPI has increased its focus on support for action planning during the professional learning activities. While IEPI staff had intended for workshop participants to have time during the workshop for action planning, workshop providers did not always allot such time. Feedback from the Inmate Education Training Workshops suggested
that respondents wanted more support around planning. IEPI staff increased their efforts to ensure that resource providers included time at the next workshop, the Basic Skills Summit, for guided team activities. As previously noted, this was one of the highest-rated aspects of the summit. Recent workshops on financial aid also included time built into the agenda to support team exercises and action planning. Moreover, as part of the recruitment efforts for workshops, colleges are being encouraged to send cross-functional teams to events, which directly supports action planning, breaking down campus silos, and facilitating change.

PROMOTING COLLABORATION AND INTEGRATION

As the initiative matures — with multiple workshops delivered, the PLN launched, and multiple PRTs deployed — IEPI leadership and staff have begun to focus more explicitly on integrating learning across the initiative. IEPI leadership has developed organizational structures for IEPI stakeholders to meet and exchange ideas about how best to integrate resources and has invited ideas about how to incorporate learning across IEPI learning platforms: PRTs, the PLN, and the professional learning workshops. For example, resources developed on specific topical areas, including Integrated Planning and Data Disaggregation, will be offered in different modes and will be incorporated into a variety of IEPI workshops, as well as into the PLN. Linkages to PRTs are also being explored. Data from survey respondents support this approach.
Recommendations for Building on IEPI Key Strengths

Building on the four key strengths identified above, EdInsights recommends the following:

- Let stakeholders know IEPI leadership incorporates their input.
- Identify learning outcomes early, share them broadly, and reflect on how they support IEPI goals.
- Support colleges by building change management skills and providing structured time for action planning.
- Continue to explore strategies for integration across professional development activities.

**LET STAKEHOLDERS KNOW IEPI LEADERSHIP INCORPORATES THEIR INPUT**

IEPI leadership should communicate to stakeholders about how it is using their input to shape the initiative and enhance success. The extent to which leadership listens to and acts on stakeholder feedback is commendable, and ensuring that stakeholders understand how their feedback is being utilized will help to guarantee that they continue to actively engage with IEPI. IEPI leadership should consider sharing key findings from surveys with the community, letting stakeholders know when their input has resulted in a specific change or action, and generally making visible the feedback loop. IEPI leadership and staff should leverage the newly-launched initiative website and electronic newsletters to raise the visibility of stakeholder input and resulting actions.

**IDENTIFY LEARNING OUTCOMES EARLY, SHARE THEM BROADLY, AND REFLECT ON HOW THEY SUPPORT IEPI GOALS**

We recommend identifying resource-specific learning outcomes early in the process of program development. This allows the outcomes to inform the design of programmatic activities, as well as the design of the evaluation. Once the learning outcomes are identified, we recommend sharing them broadly with presenters and participants who were not involved in the design of the program. Sharing them with presenters will help familiarize the presenters with the intended goals and help ensure that program content closely matches those goals. Sharing the learning outcomes with participants helps them understand what type of learning to expect and helps colleges identify the right people to send. We also recommend having conversations about how resource-specific learning outcomes connect to the overall IEPI goals. This will help educate stakeholders about how professional development activities support initiative success and will help IEPI leadership track how well activities are supporting IEPI overarching goals.

**SUPPORT COLLEGES BY BUILDING CHANGE MANAGEMENT SKILLS AND PROVIDING STRUCTURED TIME FOR ACTION PLANNING**

IEPI should support an increased focus on activities designed to promote effective implementation planning and change management. Community college faculty, staff, and administrators especially need tools for integrated planning to help with initiative fatigue and to streamline efforts to ensure their sustainability. These resources will also support the state priority of promoting system leadership training to better coordinate planning, implementation, and outcomes of statewide initiatives (as stated in the 2016 Budget Act). Resource providers should build action planning, implementation strategies, and change management into workshops. IEPI leadership and staff should identify, develop, and highlight related PLN resources in connection to these efforts. This will also help with evaluation activities, as participants will be better able to describe
intended actions and impact, which in turn will support follow-up evaluation efforts to understand participants’ perceptions about actions and impacts. IEPI leadership and staff should continue to encourage colleges to send teams to events, as this practice directly supports these goals.

CONTINUE TO EXPLORE STRATEGIES FOR INTEGRATION ACROSS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

IEPI leadership has done an excellent job of focusing on integrating resources across the initiative (and linking to other CCC initiatives), and should continue its strategies of encouraging collaboration, coordination, and integration. IEPI leadership and staff should continue to encourage resource developers to look at cross-platform strategies for promoting learning around specific topics. Participants and users should be actively reminded about related resources that they can access to support continued learning. As broad, cross-cutting topical areas such as integrated planning and change management emerge, finding ways to embed relevant learning resources across platforms will reinforce learning and strengthen success.
Evaluating for Impact

IEPI leadership recognized the need for developmental, formative, and summative evaluation early in the development of this initiative. To meet these broad assessment needs, EdInsights designed an evaluation study to understand IEPI’s short-, medium-, and long-term impacts on the IEPI goals of improving fiscal viability, state and federal compliance, and student outcomes and reducing accreditation sanctions and audit findings. In addition, the study enables evaluators to provide feedback to IEPI leadership on the initiative’s internal processes.

In conducting the evaluation, we sought to understand:

- how effectively professional development activities are delivered;
- how participants use the services and activities;
- perceptions about if and how colleges change their policies, processes, and programs after participation; and
- how participants perceive changes in outcomes and behaviors.

Since initiating our evaluation work in Spring 2016, EdInsights evaluators have observed and participated in steering committee meetings, convenings, workgroups, and other functions related to the development of IEPI professional development resources; administered participant and staff surveys; gathered usage data; conducted staff and provider interviews; and held stakeholder focus groups to understand the impact of IEPI activities on IEPI goals. We also have sought to evaluate integration across professional development resources to understand how impact is scaling up across the initiative.

To lay the groundwork for evaluating medium- and long-term impacts, surveys administered to date have asked respondents about their intended actions and anticipated impacts. We will follow up with respondents at least three months after the conclusion of the workshop, using a combination of surveys, interviews, and focus groups to understand how each IEPI resource impacted their practices and policies on their home campuses, if at all. In addition, we will look to understand how individuals who attended workshops or used PLN resources are working with colleagues to achieve their goals, and the extent to which professional learning connects colleagues across silos to enable collaborative change related to IEPI goals.
EdInsights’ first workshop evaluation was in June 2016. The second, and last, workshop evaluation completed at the time of this report was in August 2016.