

Charge for the Working Professional Recruitment and Service Task Force Spring 2023

Background

Cal State East Bay has had significant enrollment declines in recent years. For example we have experienced a 12.5% decline in headcount over the past five years and our “target” undergraduate CA resident enrollment, on which the allocation of our portion of state funding from the CSU System depends, has similarly declined. As the number of high school graduates in the East Bay region is expected to decline, it is imperative that we more proactively reach out to nontraditional university student segments, beyond high school and community college transfer students.

At the same time, estimates of working aged adults in California with “some college, but no degree” exceed 3 million individuals. We know that some of our departments and programs primarily serve the adult working professional segment with online, hybrid, low-residency, and part-time degree programs. More and more students and faculty have become accustomed to learning and teaching in remote formats. Students are finding us and we are able to serve them. However, how many more local working professionals could we serve by deploying more proactive and systematic recruitment strategies and ensuring our programs and services are designed to meet these students’ unique needs?

Charge

The charge to this Task Force is to explore this question and make recommendations on how to expand our enrollment of students who are often described as “working adults” or “nontraditional students.” Since the majority of Cal State East Bay students work, I am using the term “working professional” student to describe a segment of individuals who have current career-level employment, but who may be stalled in career progression by not having completed a degree. Some of these students may be supported by their employers to complete degrees. Many self-support Extension programs have been designed to serve the working professional segment, but Extension enrollments do not count toward our target “stateside” undergraduate enrollment. Though increased graduate enrollments are desirable, we have an immediate need to increase stateside undergraduate enrollment to mitigate reductions to our state allocation from the CSU System.

In making recommendations on recruiting more working professional students, Task Force members should proactively address our equity and anti-racism goals throughout the process. Also consider how we can leverage existing programs and services rather than completely “reinventing the wheel.” Additional specific elements to consider include:

- Describe the “current state” of Cal State East Bay programs that primarily serve the target “working professional” student segment;
- Identify recruitment strategies to reach the target student segment, including contract programs directly with employers and recruiting our own employees into bachelor’s degree programs;

- Explore working with large employers like Starbucks and Amazon who support degree attainment for their employees. How might we become a “preferred provider” for these and other large employers?
- Identify certificate or associate degree credential holders that have high potential to enroll in a bachelors degree program where we might establish articulation agreements to streamline bachelor’s degree completion;
- Assess current services, including student services, that may need to adapt or expand to serve the target student segment (e.g., registrar, financial aid, advising, library, etc.) and what adaptations are needed;
- How do we ensure sufficient focus and attention to increasing enrollments from the working professional student segment? Where within the university structure should this responsibility reside so it remains a priority?
- Identification of any additional issues to address in implementing this change.

In addition, this Task Force will work with the president’s office to provide ongoing updates as well as sponsor open forums and retreats as needed to engage the Cal State East Bay community in this initiative.

You are encouraged to access other experts and consultants within the university to assist in this work. In addition, I am happy to meet with the Task Force as needed to answer any questions and provide other guidance.

I would appreciate receiving your report, even a preliminary report, by the end of spring semester 2023 so we can begin to implement initial recommendations during the summer of 2023.

Thank you for your willingness to serve on this Task Force. Not only will your work contribute to our priority of financial sustainability, but your work will also help us in our broader mission to serve the existing workforce and employers in our region.