

Occupational Training Institute (OTI)

Reflection Questions

- 1. Overview: Assess program, services, division during the 2019-20 year. Describe accomplishments, challenges and how challenges were addressed. Include evidence that illustrates accomplishments and challenges.**

The Occupational Training Institute (OTI) supports several programs, CalWORKs, NOVA, Work2Future, and CompTechS, and we were faced with the challenges of making sure our students had the tools necessary for remote learning, could properly use the tools, all while working toward reducing the stress of the transition for our students and ourselves.

The county assisted with providing funding for CalWORKs students to specifically purchase computers and various Wi-Fi services. Also, the county provided additional funding for food, housing assistance, and other basic needs. Working with the bookstore, Sofia Abad and Carlita Alamban met with students, following COVID protocols, to obtain signatures on book vouchers, deliver books, and backpacks.

Every year, OTI hosts a holiday party for our students and their families and this year CARE students and their families were invited. Once again, Sofia and Carlita, did an amazing job ensuring that our first ever drive thru Toy Drive, which included an appearance by Santa, was successful. Due to Sofia's long-standing relationship with the Family Giving Tree, a non-profit organization dedicated to serving underprivileged children, she was able to secure toys for the children of our students. The Food Pantry donated food to our families making certain that our students and their families had food during the holiday season which falls at the end of the month when supplies are lean. Our De Anza colleagues donated over \$2,000 to our students that was used to purchase and donate Target cards to our students further ensuring that their most basic needs were met. We are so appreciative of the support we received.

Joe Lipsig, CompTechS Lab Coordinator, made numerous trips to transition his campus lab to a home computer lab. Although, he was not able to load all of his supplies he had enough inventory to fulfil most requests for computers. To date, Joe has delivered 65 computers to students who span both campuses and a variety of programs which include Financial Aid, EOPS, Veterans, and Men of Color.

Our WIOA students, NOVA and Work2Future, received support from their referring agencies and seemed to navigate the transition much better than students in other programs.

Mike Kaku, OTI's academic counselor, met with students via Zoom, email, and phone but admits that he misses meeting students face to face. In addition to creating ed plans, he

assisted students with getting computers and connecting them with resources and services such as financial aid and processing admissions office requests.

2. Describe how program plans were met, including evidence that illustrate how these program plans were met.

To help CalWORKs students remain in compliance with their county contracts, the county acted as an intermediary as a way to get forms signed and modified program guidelines such as mitigating required hours and activities to help students adjust to 24-7 parenting and remote learning. The Chancellor's office and the county authorized continued payment for students who were participating in work study program although their worksites were closed. We hired a work study student as a peer counselor for our students to help befriend, make suggestions, and instruct students on navigating the ups and downs of being a parent student.

The CompTechS Program conducted training via Zoom which resulted in several students being hired as interns. Training will continue, staying as close to the previous curriculum with enhancements, in preparing students for future internship placements. CompTechS was able to retain 3 work study students to help with refurbishing computers.

Our counselor met with OTI students via Zoom, phone and email, to create ed plans and assist with class enrollment.

3. Describe your experience related to transition of remote work, including online services, instruction, and supporting students offsite during the pandemic.

Not only did the staff experience the stress of helping students transition to remote learning, we also had our own stressors of transitioning to working remotely. We hauled computers, chairs, folders, and reams of paper home, often realizing that we did not have everything we needed. In addition to supplies, we also realized that in order to meet student needs and work online, we needed to improve upon our computer skills. The district provided a variety of new software and trainings that has helped make our jobs easier and more effective in helping students.

As mentioned previously, Carlita and Sofia delivered books and completed intakes with students, Joe delivered computers to student's homes, and I did the same when necessary. Also, hosting a the OTI First Annual Toy Drive was another major way we supported students offsite.

Whether we met students to get forms signed, delivered computers or toys, it was stressful with the worry of staying safe.

4. Describe how Student Equity goals were met and any improvements that were made. Include evidence that illustrate how goals were met using institutional data.

OTI manages several programs, CalWORKs, NOVA, Work2Future, and CompTechS, each with their own student demographic but with the same goals of ensuring that our students have the tools and resources needed to achieve their academic goals.

The CalWORKs program is designed to support low income families with children under 18 years of age. Participants in this program include students from a variety of special populations. CalWORKs students range in age from 18 and older, may have learning disabilities, may be ESL students, with most participants being single mothers. Commonly, single mothers face a myriad of problems with financial insecurity being at the top of the list, of all the family structures single mothers usually slightly above or below the poverty lines. This results in the inability to provide food, clothing, stable housing, medical care, and childcare for their children. Many are domestic violence survivors, face custody and co-parenting battles, emotional and mental health stressors, stigmas, and have no time for self-care. Add to that the county contractual obligations, monthly attendance, and income verifications, to maintain program eligibility for their basic needs, and other pertinent resources and services or face losing those basic needs for non-compliance. With all of this we have yet to add their parental responsibilities, coursework, and maybe their part-time jobs.

This student population comes with barriers before choosing to earn a degree and get create a better future. To retain and support these students until completion, their needs are varied, expansive, and long term. The key to retention is building trusting relationships, ensuring their have access to basic needs services, and advocating for their access to much needed resources. Our staff stays in close and frequent contact with our students allowing us to be aware of each student's individual needs and working with their case managers at the county to ensure they had the tools needed to attend class such as textbooks and childcare. Despite these barriers, 63% of our students make huge sacrifice, beat the odds, and go on to complete and transfer to San Jose State, UC Davis, UC Santa Cruz, and UC Berkley and other universities. As the institutional data indicates, for the past 5 years, the CalWORKs program was endured a sharp decline in enrollment. This is in alignment with the county's data that reports there are only five thousand CalWORKs families in this county, whereas 5 years ago there were fifty thousand families. This decline is due to the high cost of living, so many leave the Bay Area and proof that the CalWORKs program works.

Our WIOA students, NOVA and Work2Future program participants, are more mature and have exited the workforce, usually due to layoffs. They attend De Anza to gain skills or enhance their current skill set to re-enter the workforce. Challenges these student face include having only one year to complete their program, may lose financial support from their referring agency if they require extended time to complete, and their program eligibility status may be contingent upon their unemployment benefits whose low amounts may force them to work low wage jobs to pay their bills. There is no data tracking this student population but 50% of our students earn their certificates. Unfortunately, we have no data as to whether they obtain gainful

employment but hopefully our partnering agencies track this information. Also, this student population has seen a decline in enrollment due to the high cost of living in this area and the historically low unemployment rates.

CompTechS refurbishes donated computers to give to students in need and supports an IT internships program. Although, there are other programs that provide students with computers, CompTechS has consistently served underrepresented students. To date, CompTechS has donated computers to 455 CalWORKs students, 131 EOPS students, 72 Veterans, 85 DSPS students, and 21 Men of Color students, as well other students who may not qualify for other support programs. Without computers students would not have been able to complete their coursework. The internship opportunities exist to provide students with real world work experience and offer a path toward employment. Our assignments are specifically in the IT area and over the years approximately 25 students have gained lucrative permanent employment. We hope to expand our program and offer assignments in related disciplines.

5. Describe the impact of the 2020 pandemic and all of the associated events have had on the students served by the program. Share what the program review data reveals about the corresponding impacts of the current circumstances.

The impact of the 2020 pandemic may have forced us to work differently but it has not all been bad. The staff has been forced to upgrade their computer skills which means that we were better able to serve our students and help them adapt to remote learning and communicating. It is understood that low income students would be most adversely impacted by the pandemic, therefore additional funding and incentives have been offered. The county has given CalWORKs students additional housing and tech payments, and other incentives in addition to their regular benefits. These additional funds have allowed the students to focus not so much on their insecurities but their families and course work. The pandemic has further exacerbated the decrease in enrollment of this program, which has an adverse effect on the number of students in our program.

Surprisingly, the WIOA programs has not seen an increase in enrollments into their programs as anticipated, which will result into no referrals to our college. NOVA and Work2Future surmise that lack of interest in their programs are due to the amount of unemployment benefits being more than their client's current monthly earnings.

For CompTechS, the pandemic has caused an exhaustion of the supply of our refurbished computers causing us not to be able to provide students with computers. We are hoping computer donations will be restored to previous levels due employers upgrading workforce computers to facilitate efficient remote work. The CompTechS internship program has also been adversely affected by the pandemic in that our employers have had to reorganize and revise strategies amidst budget reductions that has resulted in releasing our interns.

6. Describe resource needs based on current programs and services to serve students effectively and efficiently.

As a grant funded department, with shrinking program budgets, who supports one of the most vulnerable populations, it would be beneficial to receive institutional financial support to hire another program coordinator to efficiently serve students and balance our overwhelming workloads. Another coordinator will allow us to better support our student which would increase retention and increase the number of students who complete their programs. We would also be able to recruit employers to rebuild our internship program enabling us to offer internship opportunities to students. Our CompTechS program needs surplus computers so we can continue training students to refurbish computers in preparation for internships and build an inventory to donate computers to students in need.

7. Other Relevant Information, including future anticipated goals.

Being a self-funded department, that receives very little institutional funding OTI is always seeking additional funding opportunities. Fresh Success, a state program designed to support CTE students receiving CalFresh benefits, will soon be added to the list of programs OTI manages. In addition to adding new programs (which requires additional coordinators), OTI would like to be able to apply for grants to further help other underrepresented populations and add more services for students. Moreover, receiving more ongoing financial support from the district and colleges will, which is an additional goal, will make OTI financially stable.