

Counties at Work

San Bernardino County, California
Case Study

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About NACo:

The [National Association of Counties](#) (NACo) **strengthens America's counties**, serving nearly 40,000 county elected officials and 3.6 million county employees. Founded in 1935, NACo unites county officials to:

- **Advocate county priorities** in federal policymaking;
- **Promote exemplary county policies** and practices;
- **Nurture leadership skills** and expand knowledge networks;
- **Optimize county and taxpayer resources** and cost savings; and
- **Enrich the public's understanding** of county government.

The National Association of Counties Research Foundation (NACoRF) is a non-profit organization recognized by the U.S. Department of the Treasury Internal Revenue Service as a 501c3 public charity providing education, technical assistance and research to counties. NACoRF's mission is to ascertain, develop and distribute knowledge about county governments and training of public officials, prospective public officials and other interested parties.

About NACo's Landscape Analysis:

In partnership with the [ECMC Foundation](#), NACo conducted a national landscape analysis on counties' role and decision-making authority in post-secondary education. This analysis identified impactful county efforts including directly allocating local funds, pursuing regional and intergovernmental partnerships to leverage federal resources and coordinating post-secondary education systems with county systems, such as health and human services, as well as with local private industry. Such efforts maximize educational and employment opportunities and increase access for residents. Recently, counties have led and supported their post-secondary education institutions in mitigating local challenges related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Through an electronic survey and group and individual interviews, NACo examined how county leaders:

1. Make decisions affecting the post-secondary education sector;
2. Allocate public funding impacting higher education institutions;
3. Create partnerships with the post-secondary education sector to strengthen its connection with other systems; and
4. Work to slow the spread of COVID-19 in post-secondary education settings.

In conjunction with NACo's report "[Counties At Work: Counties Support Post-Secondary Education and Workforce Opportunities for Residents.](#)" NACo published a set of case studies sharing county examples and best practices in creating cross-sector partnerships with higher education systems to improve economic resiliency and mobility, workforce preparedness, educational attainment and gainful employment for residents. County leaders representing local colleges and universities, workforce boards and human services agencies participated in a series of interviews with NACo to share their local efforts and best practices. For more information, please contact Rashida Brown, Associate Program Director for Children, Youth and Families at rbrown@naco.org or Arabella Pluta-Ehlers, Program Manager for Children, Youth and Families at aplutaehlers@naco.org.

Counties Support Post-Secondary Education and Workforce Opportunities for Residents

San Bernardino County, California

Interviewees: Heather Cockerill, Program Coordinator for Health Promotion and Education, San Bernardino County Department of Public Health; Donna Eddleman, University Dean of Student Affairs, University of Redlands; Robert Nava, Vice President for Advancement, California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB) and Executive Director, CSUSB Philanthropic Foundation

County name, state: San Bernardino County, Calif.

Rural, suburban, or urban: Urban

Population: 2,171,603

Poverty rate: 16.0%

Unemployment rate: 4.0%

Number of post-secondary education institutions in the county: 28

Student enrollment in the county's post-secondary education institutions: 125,400



About San Bernardino County, California

San Bernardino County, Calif. is the fifth-most populous county in the state and the 14th-most populous in the United Statesⁱ. San Bernardino County, with neighboring Riverside County, comprises the Inland Empire, which is one of the nation's fastest growing metropolitan areas. The county is an integral part of the Southern California economy and widely supports localities across the region.ⁱⁱ In 2010, with input from regional governments and the community, the County Board of Supervisors put forth a vision statement about the future of the county, which "envision[s] a vibrant economy with a skilled workforce that attracts employers who seize the opportunities presented by the county's unique advantages and provide the jobs that create countywide prosperity."ⁱⁱⁱ This vision informs the county's budgetary and programmatic decisions and helps strengthen local industries. The county's major industries include logistics and manufacturing, healthcare and construction.^{iv}

The county role in post-secondary education

San Bernardino County is home to several higher education institutions, including Barstow Community College, Brandman University (Ontario campus), California State University of San Bernardino, Chaffey College, Copper Mountain College, Crafton Hills College, Loma Linda University, National University (campuses in Ontario and San Bernardino), Palo Verde Community College (Needles campus), San Bernardino Valley College, University of Redlands (Redlands) and Victor Valley College. The county is governed by a five-member Board of Supervisors, who make decisions on matters affecting county government and its operations and advance local policies and funding. The board is responsible for approving the county budget, which in fiscal year 2020 was \$6.9 billion.^v

While the county board does not directly make decisions affecting post-secondary education institutions, San Bernardino County government has a countywide vision and goals that promote access to quality education and training for residents of all ages by ensuring cradle-to-career success and fostering a business-friendly environment. These goals were informed by community stakeholders and experts and refined by city, town and county leaders.^{vi}

Moreover, several government agencies are responsible for implementing and carrying out these countywide goals.

Cradle to Career Goal

- Educating the public on the broad impacts of students dropping out of school and the benefits of completing high school and advancing to post-secondary education
- Educating and training the workforce for existing local career opportunities and attract new high-demand jobs to the area
- Fostering entrepreneurship and incorporating training that provides students with the skills to create their own jobs

Business-Friendly Goal

- Advancing the expansion and attraction of, and workforce training efforts for, the industry sectors most likely to generate jobs for our county
- Developing the next generation of business and community leaders

Source: San Bernardino Countywide Vision



“Through [the DPH Internship and Volunteer Program], it finally felt like we have a true pipeline [for moving students] from the university into a job setting.”

– Heather Cockerill, Public Health Program Coordinator for San Bernardino County

Funding for post-secondary education institutions and programming

While San Bernardino County does not provide local funding to its post-secondary education institutions, it funds county-based employment and workforce development resources for residents to have access to training, higher education enrollment and job placement services. In the fiscal year 2019-2020 budget, the county allocated \$4.3 million to its Economic Development Agency, which involves the administration of local economic development and workforce services. In the past two years, the Board of Supervisors approved over \$500,000 to support GenerationGo!, a youth employment program jointly operated by the Economic Development and Workforce Development departments.^{viii} The program also receives funding from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).^{ix}

Coordination and collaboration for improved workforce outcomes

As part of its countywide vision, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors has created the Vision2Succeed campaign to connect county residents to opportunities that strengthen their career skills and simultaneously support current and attract new employers to the county. The county is working to operationalize and advance the vision’s goals and objectives through the San Bernardino County Workforce Development Board (WDB). The WDB is led by superintendents of K-12 systems and local leaders



of post-secondary education institutions, local businesses and community-based organizations. The WDB also manages the county’s America’s Job Centers of California and offers services for businesses and job seekers to create a strong, competitive workforce and local economy. Resources for employers include a free human resources hotline, support for recruiting and hiring candidates and resources and funding to support training needs. Job seekers can utilize the job centers to receive support in identifying and applying for jobs, preparing for interviews and finding and paying for training programs.

Through its WDB, the county operates GenerationGo! which connects youth ages 16 to 24 to career and educational opportunities in county government and the private sector. The Board of Supervisors and Chief Executive Officer for San Bernardino County support Generation Go! by providing county departments with the resources needed to place and supervise interns and identifying and securing employers willing to provide work-based learning experiences for youth.^x El Proyecto YouthSource Centers provide out-of-school, jobless and low-income youth with career services as well as connections to alternate educational opportunities – such as an alternative high school or a General Educational Development (GED)

program— and occupational skills training for in-demand industries.^{xi} Similarly, the Colton Redlands Yucaipa Regional Occupational Program connects out-of-school youth to employment placement specialists whose role is to help them develop career and personal goals and access resources to meet them.^{xii}

The San Bernardino County Department of Public Health (DPH) partners with California State University of San Bernardino (CSUSB) and other post-secondary education institutions to hire student interns from across the county and region to engage them in public health services and professions. Students from more than 40 institutions in the region, including CSUSB and several community colleges, can apply for the internship program. As a part of this effort, interns assist with conducting research and analysis on various public health projects. They also support the delivery of health care services to county residents through DPH. A broad range of programs in the department use interns, including Communicable Disease, Clinic Operations, Environmental Health Services, Nutrition and Reentry.^{xiii} When possible, the DPH offers opportunities for interns to remain on staff full-time after graduating.

Slowing the spread of COVID-19 in post-secondary education settings

In response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the DPH is providing guidance to both K-12 and post-secondary education systems to ensure they are following the state's COVID-19 requirements. For private post-secondary education institutions, COVID-19 has created opportunities for building relationships with county government. The state of California required post-secondary education institutions to submit a prevention plan in response to its COVID-19 guidance. County public health department staff reviewed these plans to ensure compliance and provided post-secondary education institutions with guidance.

Since March 2020, CSUSB and Redlands have been conducting courses primarily online. To help slow the spread of the virus, these institutions have closed their campuses and reserved dorms for international students or those experiencing housing insecurity. For CSUSB, switching to online programming was a “major pivot,” as it traditionally offers fewer courses and programs online. At the start of the pandemic, the university relied on guidance from the county public health department to create its depopulation plan for transitioning students off campus.

Looking forward, Redlands is scheduled to reopen in the spring of 2021 using a hybrid approach. Students will be on campus but only housed in single dorm rooms and attend large lectures online. San Bernardino County government has played a major role in making the students' return possible by establishing a COVID-19 testing site on the Redlands campus. Students and faculty will also be able to get tested regularly onsite at no cost to the individual or the institution. The program also assists the county in supporting its efforts to balance and increase test volume and frequency, which would help detect positive cases early.

When CSUSB and Redlands students are struggling to meet their basic needs during the pandemic, the institutions use a mix of private and federal COVID-19 relief funds to help fill these gaps. Both institutions are utilizing private funding to assist students experiencing financial hardship with increased or unexpected expenses, such as food, transportation or medical costs. Both also use private funds to support its undocumented and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) students, who are ineligible for the federal funding. Redlands, which focuses on serving first-generation and Pell grant students, also operates an on-campus food pantry that serves students and the greater community. Additionally, because there are areas in the county with poor WiFi access, post-secondary education institutions are exploring ways to help fill broadband access gaps for students. Redlands also leveraged Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding to support students in purchasing hotspots or upgrading their internet bandwidth, while CSUSB purchased approximately 1,500 laptops and 400 hotspots during their initial transition to online programming. Leaders from both institutions believe that this digital divide existed before COVID-19 began but was brought to light by the pandemic.

Conclusion

San Bernardino County has prioritized education and workforce development as a part of its broader vision for the county. By working with post-secondary education institutions and leveraging the workforce development board, the government of San Bernardino County has been able to increase career readiness opportunities and resources for adults and youth. Throughout COVID-19, the county public health department has served as a vital resource for post-secondary education institutions as they take measures to comply with state guidance and protect students from getting the virus.

Endnotes

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- ⁱⁱ State of California Employment Development Department. (n.d.). *San Bernardino County, California*. <https://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/geography/sanbernardino-county.html>
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- ^v San Bernardino County. (2019, November). *2019-2020 Adopted Budget*. <https://cms.sbcounty.gov/Portals/59/Content/2019-2020/2019-20-Adopted-Budget.pdf>
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- ^{viii} San Bernardino County. (2019, November). *2019-2020 Adopted Budget*. <https://cms.sbcounty.gov/Portals/59/Content/2019-2020/2019-20-Adopted-Budget.pdf>
- ^{ix} San Bernardino County. (n.d.). *GenerationGo!* <https://wp.sbcounty.gov/workforce/youth/>
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- ^{xiii} San Bernardino County Public Health. (n.d.). *Internship and Volunteer Program*. <https://wp.sbcounty.gov/dph/internship-and-volunteer-program-2/>

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