



INSIGHT PAPER

The Job-Ready Graduate

How Community Colleges Can Deliver on Career Readiness





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1

Introduction

Students choose community colleges to improve their job prospects and learn in-demand skills and as a strong step in improving their economic mobility. Career outcomes remain one of the strongest motivators for students to enroll in community college—[74% of recent students¹](#) said their top goal is to gain skills to be successful at work. This means that career readiness needs to be at the forefront of the community college agenda.

However, it's become clear that there are growing threats to student career readiness despite an increasing appetite for strong career outcomes. The fallout of pandemic disruptions has not only impacted students socially and academically. Increasingly, both students and employers are reporting that graduates are launching into the workforce unprepared to meet the demands of their chosen industry. Specifically, new research on career readiness shows:

- **Many students begin college without a defined career plan:** [Research indicates²](#) that nearly one-third (31%) of recent high school graduates are unsure about their educational or career direction, and only 33% reported that their schools consistently exposed them to diverse career options.
- **The classroom feels disconnected from career:** Students may struggle to see the connections between their program and their career goals unless there is an intentional effort to incorporate career-specific skills, project-based learning, and employer connections. For example, despite the many benefits of internships, only [19% of community college students³](#) have participated in one, a figure that has remained unchanged over the past five years.

- **Students don't feel prepared to find a job:** [Forty-two percent](#)⁴ of students reported that their colleges taught them “very little” or “not at all” about in-demand jobs in their regions, while [only 28%](#)⁵ feel their college is adequately preparing them to secure a job quickly after graduation.
- **Students aren't socio-emotionally prepared for their careers:** Aside from securing a job, nearly [40% of recent graduates](#)⁶ feel their college or university inadequately prepared them for “the emotional or behavioral challenges of transitioning to the workplace.”
- **Students feel like they aren't meeting their career goals:** Although graduates with associate's degrees [consistently outearn](#)⁷ their peers who hold only a high school credential or have earned some college credits, many students feel like they haven't reached their career goals. A [survey of community college attendees](#)⁸ found that only 49% felt their education helped them achieve key career goals such as skill-building, financial stability, and higher earnings.
- **Employers aren't impressed with new graduates:** Approximately [40% of employers state](#)⁹ that new graduates are not adequately prepared for the workforce, indicating a significant gap between the skills taught in academia and the demands of professional jobs.

Growing skepticism about the value of a college degree is shaping how students perceive higher education's role in their career success. This shift has placed increased pressure on colleges, including community colleges, to prove their value to prospective students. However, community colleges hold a distinct advantage—Americans have more confidence in them than in four-year institutions, likely due to their affordability and career-focused approach. [Nearly half \(48%\)](#)¹⁰ express high confidence in community colleges, compared to only one-third (33%) for four-year colleges and universities. This confidence gap presents a key opportunity for community colleges to differentiate themselves by highlighting their cost-effectiveness, workforce-aligned programs, and strong student support.

“The phenomenon of students sitting out of college seems to be more widespread... [This] could be the beginning of a whole generation of students rethinking the value of college itself. I think if that were the case, this is much more serious than just a temporary pandemic-related disruption.”

*-Doug Shapiro, National Student Clearinghouse*¹¹



2

What's at risk if career readiness gaps aren't closed?

Most students come to college with the goal of improving their social mobility, seeking the skills and credentials needed to secure better-paying jobs and brighter futures. For many, community colleges offer the most accessible and affordable means of achieving these goals. However, if career readiness gaps remain unaddressed, these institutions risk falling short of delivering on their promise to students and their communities.

1 Lower Wages and Higher Unemployment
Americans without a college degree [earn significantly less](#)¹² than those with one and face higher unemployment rates. As more students choose to forgo college, it's crucial to start career readiness conversations early, helping them see how a college credential can lead to higher wages and greater job stability.

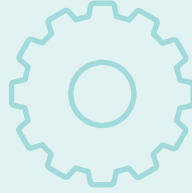
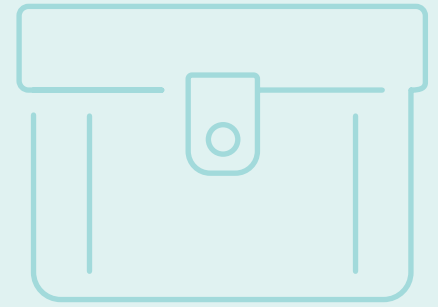
2 Talent Shortages
A lack of skilled workers can slow business growth, reduce economic development, and limit opportunities in local economies. Talent shortages are already impacting critical fields such as [health care](#),¹³ [education](#),¹⁴ and [construction](#),¹⁵ affecting the public's access to essential services.

3 Strain on Employer Partnerships
Employers increasingly report career readiness gaps in recent college graduates, [with 90%](#)¹⁶ stating that graduates from the past three years are less prepared than earlier cohorts. Underprepared graduates can create a strain in relationships between institutions and employers, who expect a pipeline of job-ready employees.

4 Decreased Retention
Students who don't see a clear path to a fulfilling career or feel uncertain about job prospects after graduation are more likely to leave their programs before completing them.

5 Decreased Trust
Public perception of community colleges can suffer when graduates are not prepared for the workforce, leading to doubts about the value of higher education. If students struggle to secure well-paying jobs, community colleges may be seen as ineffective career pathways, which can weaken enrollment, employer partnerships, and public support.

Closing career readiness gaps is essential to ensure that students achieve their goals, employers find the talent they need, and community colleges continue to fulfill their mission. By addressing these challenges, institutions can strengthen student outcomes, workforce development, and their own long-term success.



3

What limits career readiness efforts at community colleges?

It might seem that the solution to closing career readiness gaps is to hire more career counselors and expand career preparation initiatives. While these strategies can be helpful, they are difficult to implement as more professionals leave higher education roles and hiring new talent becomes increasingly challenging.

This limited capacity puts strain on career readiness efforts and may stall new career-focused initiatives. Some career services professionals may feel overwhelmed by administrative tasks—such as scheduling appointments, sending emails, and following up on referrals—**leaving them little time for meaningful conversations with students.**

Additional barriers that community colleges face when addressing career readiness gaps include:



Complex student population

Many community college students are part-time students, balancing their personal lives and jobs with academic demands. This makes it challenging to find time for career exploration, internships, and job readiness activities, which are critical for preparing students for the workforce. In short, students may struggle to fit career readiness activities into their schedule.



Big demand, small teams

A [national survey¹⁷](#) shows that the average career services office serves more than 2,200 students per professional staff member, making individualized support nearly impossible. Even if an institution secures resources to hire additional staff, finding qualified candidates who stay long-term can be difficult. Instead of simply hiring more staff, institutions can focus on leveraging technology and optimizing existing resources to extend career readiness services without overburdening their teams.



Lack of integrated technology

Career services teams may be manually tracking student appointments, who is attending career readiness events, and which career planning milestones students are completing. They may be using technology that is isolated from faculty, advising, and other professionals, which makes it more difficult to collaborate on career readiness. This is time consuming and often results in duplication of effort and poor data insights.

For community colleges that are understaffed and underfunded and whose technology is poorly integrated, overcoming these barriers can feel overwhelming. However, some colleges are making shifts in their technology, strategic priorities, pedagogy, and communications efforts that are allowing more students to successfully choose a career path and secure a good job after graduation.

In the following pages, we will explore how institutions can improve career readiness outcomes by combining workflow strategies, cross-college collaboration, and technology to reimagine career readiness across **four distinct imperatives across the career readiness journey**.

1



IMPERATIVE #1

Investing in Early Career Exploration

Only 33% of recent high school graduates⁴⁸ reported that their schools consistently exposed them to diverse career options, which means many students are selecting college majors without a clear understanding of what career they want. This increases the likelihood that a student will switch majors or leave the college entirely because their program isn't the right fit. Community colleges can be a strong partner to high schools by helping to facilitate career exploration activities and by using dual enrollment as a conduit to learn about different careers.

2



IMPERATIVE #2

Establishing Continuous Guidance

Students need consistent, intentional guidance that is personalized to their stage in the career planning journey. This guidance should start as early as high school and help students explore and contextualize career paths, develop an understanding of what career is the right fit for them, learn how to secure a job, and build the skills necessary for long-term job retention. By creating career planning milestones that span a student's entire academic career, we set the expectation that career planning is just as important as academic planning.

3



IMPERATIVE #3

Building Classroom-to-Career Connections

Eighty percent of high school students now view on-the-job learning experiences, such as internships and apprenticeships, [as essential to their postsecondary education](#)¹⁹—a 14% increase since 2022. By prioritizing experiential learning—a hands-on approach that allows students to apply classroom knowledge in real-world settings—through internships, apprenticeships, research projects, service learning, and simulations, colleges can enhance student learning. This active learning process helps students develop practical skills, deepen their understanding of course material, and build professional networks.

4



IMPERATIVE #4

Developing Workplace Entry Skills

Students need to effectively communicate their skills on their resumes and during job interviews—areas where many new graduates struggle. [One in five employers](#)²⁰ reports that recent college graduates are unprepared for job interviews. Additionally, 50% of employers say graduates ask for unrealistic compensation, and 47% have encountered candidates who have been dressed inappropriately. Beyond the interview, students also need support in understanding professional expectations once they enter the workforce. Community colleges play a crucial role in providing opportunities for students to practice these skills before they meet potential employers. Without strong resume writing, interviewing, and professional presence skills, students may face great challenges in securing and maintaining a job.



4

How are community colleges improving career readiness?

Career services at community colleges have historically owned much of the responsibility for creating strong career outcomes, but as teams shrink, career readiness needs to become a priority that's shared across the college. This might mean rethinking how career readiness is woven into first-year experience courses, how students are directed toward majors, how advisors can see which career readiness milestones a student has completed, and the role that faculty play in keeping students career-focused in the classroom.

Many community colleges are turning to technology to help in these efforts. In the following pages you will find real-world examples of how community colleges are expanding their career readiness efforts—which can include using tools such as Forage and Navigate360 to help streamline career exploration, improve student communications, organize appointment scheduling, and create digital journeys that track career readiness milestones.

Forage

Forage help students to experience what it is like to be an accountant, investment banker, software engineer, and more through free online courses designed by top companies such as Citibank, Goldman Sachs, KPMG, and Lululemon. Forage's interactive job simulations expose students to different career paths, build skills related to specific roles, and prepare students for interviews. For time-constricted community college students, these online simulations and learning tools represent an accessible gateway to improved career literacy.

Navigate360

Navigate360 is a comprehensive student CRM designed to help colleges improve enrollment, retention, persistence, and graduation rates. By combining academic planning, early alerts, appointment scheduling, and communication tools, Navigate360 empowers institutions to provide personalized support and guidance throughout a student's academic and career planning journey.



IMPERATIVE #1

Investing in Early Career Exploration

According to recent surveys, a significant portion of high school graduates, [up to 75%,²¹](#) express uncertainty about their career path after graduation, with many feeling unprepared to make college and career decisions due to limited exposure to various career options and a lack of understanding about their own strengths and aptitudes.

Community colleges should partner with high schools on career exploration to help students make informed decisions about their futures and avoid wasting time on unclear academic paths. Early exposure to various industries through internships, job shadowing, and mentorships gives students hands-on experience while developing key skills such as communication and problem-solving. These partnerships also ease the transition to college, ensuring students are prepared for both academic and professional success.

Many community colleges are using a combination of technology and community relationship building to strengthen career exploration for high school students. Here are examples of how EAB partners are helping guide students to their career path earlier:



High School Career Advisors

GERMANNA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

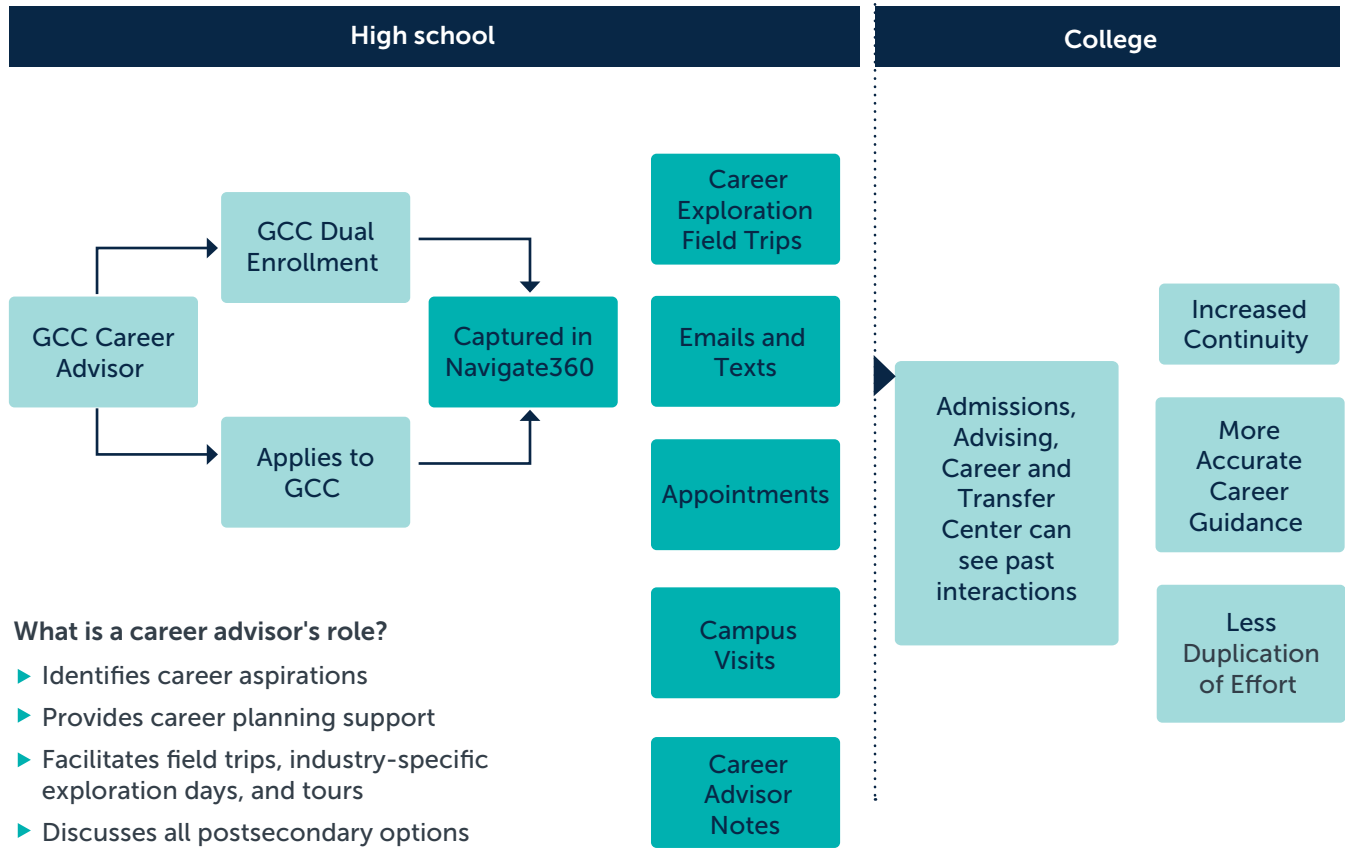
Geranna Community College partners with local high schools to place college career advisors on-site, providing students with career planning support beginning in 10th grade. These advisors help students explore career options, align coursework with their goals, and prepare for postsecondary education through one-on-one appointments, classroom visits, field trips, and specialized campus tours featuring hands-on learning activities in various fields. Many of the students they support are dual-enrolled or considering attending Geranna, and this

early engagement helps them build a strong connection with the college.

Through Navigate360, Geranna tracks student goals, academic pathways, career-related activities, and appointments, ensuring seamless communication between high school and college staff. This system helps the designated high school career advisors and on-campus advisors stay connected, so students receive informed career and academic guidance without needing to repeat their stories and without duplicating effort.



Imperative #1: Investing in Early Career Exploration



If these students enroll at Germanna, staff in admissions, advising, and career can access their profiles in Navigate360, facilitating a smooth transition and ensuring they continue receiving career support. Career guidance remains a key focus through first-year experience courses and outreach from the Career and Transfer Center,

creating continuous guidance as students work toward earning their credentials. By starting career conversations early, Germanna ensures students can make the most of their college journey by identifying and preparing for their chosen career with the appropriate coursework and relevant skill-building.

IMPERATIVE #2

Establishing Continuous Guidance

Ongoing career guidance is essential for community college students to help them align academic goals with personal aspirations and labor market demands, ultimately boosting motivation and long-term success. Yet many students, including adult learners seeking career shifts or advancement, face challenges such as limited exposure to options, unclear pathways, and a lack of confidence or resources to make informed decisions—highlighting the need for skilled guidance.

Determining a career path, learning about the day-to-day expectations of different jobs, and understanding how to connect with employers isn't a "one-and-done" experience. It requires recurring touchpoints each term to ensure students develop the skills needed to secure employment that is the best fit for them. Additionally, setting the expectation that students will receive continuous guidance from day one and clearly outlining career prep milestones will create transparency and normalize career planning as an integral, not optional, part of the college experience.

Institutions, meanwhile, struggle with understaffed career services teams, outdated or siloed systems, and the challenge of scaling personalized guidance to meet diverse student needs. Without this contextualization, students risk enrolling in programs that are a poor fit, losing interest in their coursework, and ultimately pursuing career paths that do not set them up for success.

A [2022 global survey²²](#) revealed that **34% of students sought more career planning, up from 29% in 2021**

What questions should students ask when narrowing their career path?

- What are my strengths, skills, and interests, and how do they align with potential career paths?
- What industries or fields are growing and have good job prospects in my area or nationally?
- What education, training, or certifications are required for the careers I'm considering?
- What are the daily responsibilities and work environments like in these roles?
- What is the earning potential and what is the level of job stability in the fields I'm interested in?
- What opportunities exist for advancement or professional growth in these careers?
- How can I gain hands-on experience or internships to explore my interests further?
- What is the work-life balance like in the careers I'm considering?
- Are there any regional or local job shortages in specific fields that align with my goals?
- What resources or support systems are available to help me make informed career decisions?

On the pages to follow are examples from EAB partners who are providing continual career prep support so students don't lose sight of their career pathway.

Navigate360 Career Journeys



At Dallas College, career and transfer services are combined into a single department, where counselors assist students with both career and transfer planning. This approach is based on the belief that “all students are career-focused students” and emphasizes the importance of career planning in selecting the right program and transfer destination.

All first-time-in-college (FTIC) students are assigned a career and transfer counselor during their first semester. Counselors guide students through a three-tier career readiness journey in Navigate360, which includes completing

a career assessment, setting career goals, attending career and transfer events, and exploring internship opportunities. As students work toward these milestones, they can use Navigate360 to schedule appointments with their counselor for additional support—more than 1,000 appointments were scheduled in 2024. When students attend on-campus employment workshops and events sponsored by the Career and Transfer Center, those activities are logged in Navigate360 so counselors have a clear picture of what skills students are gaining.

“ We house transfer and career services together because all students are ‘career’ students, including transfer students, and it’s our responsibility to help all students find their career path.”

Derek Soper, Associate Dean of Career Skills, Dallas College

Dallas College’s Career Readiness Journey

Milestones created in Navigate360 for all FTIC students



Tier 1



Tier 2

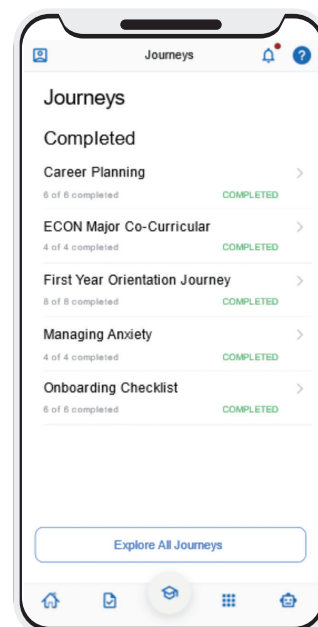
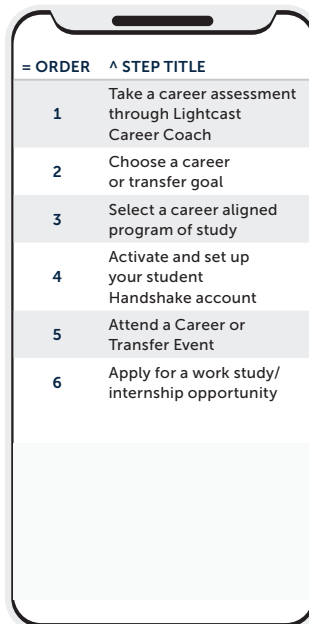


Tier 3

- Career assessment**
 Guides students to pathways that match their interests and skills.
- Choose a career or transfer goal**
 Identifies the next step after leaving DC.
- Select program**
 Students choose a program that matches their career aspirations and transfer goals.
- Set up career networking platform**
 Students log in to their platform to research jobs, internships, and career fairs.
- Attend a career or transfer event**
 Students can attend events on campus where they learn more about how to apply their degree to a career. This includes “Life in the Day” programs with local employers.
- Work study, internships, and externships**
 Students research opportunities that match their areas of interest and engage in hands-on learning. This prepares them to start their job search.

How are students guided on their career readiness journey?

After census, all FTIC students are assigned to a career and transfer counselor who prompts them to complete career readiness milestones in Navigate360. Counselors can message students, create campaigns, and prompt appointments all from Navigate360.

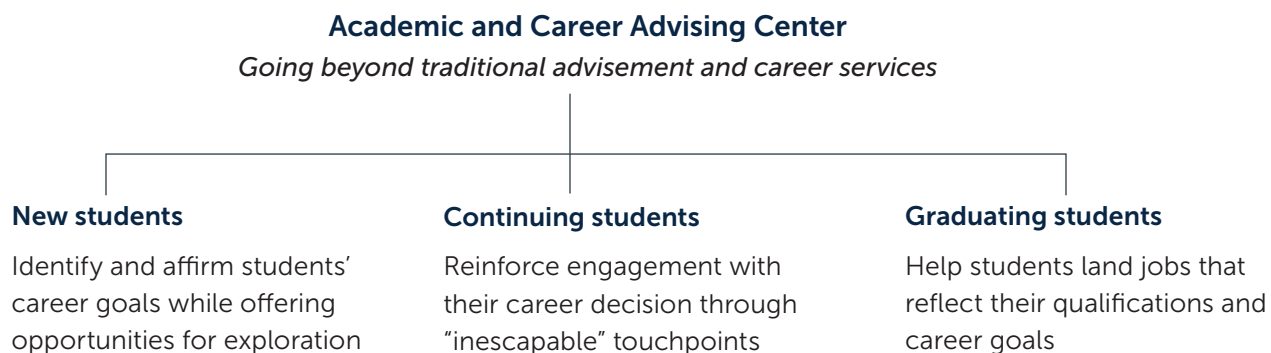


Inescapable Touchpoints



This college has embedded career exploration into the student journey from day one. At York Technical College, they moved beyond traditional advisement by integrating academic and career advising in a single center. Academic and career advising are intertwined, and they have reimagined meta majors as “career communities” to emphasize the role of career planning in selecting an academic program.

Using Navigate360, they identify student career goals with intake surveys, then reinforce those decisions with “inescapable touchpoints”—nudges, targeted communications, and career exploration tools. Undecided students are provided with Major and Career Explorer tools that can help them narrow their path.



90% | Avg. job placement rate across the past 4 years



Tech Touches Supporting This Work

- Intake survey to understand students' college and career goals
- Faculty progress reports and student “hand raise” self-alerts for early intervention
- Major and Career Explorer tools
- Campaigns and appointment scheduling to connect directly with students

Increasing Career Center Appointments to Improve Guidance



Weekly, Joliet’s advising department sends lists of undecided students to the career services office to encourage career exploration and help students refine their major choices. Career counselors use Navigate360 to send emails, text messages, and appointment campaign prompts, encouraging undecided students to complete career assessments, attend career events, or meet one-on-one with a career counselor. Students can also use Navigate360 to schedule career appointments directly from the college’s website, further reducing barriers to connecting with a counselor.

These efforts, along with an increased presence at orientation and in-classroom presentations—including offering to present or bring in employers when faculty need to miss class—have significantly expanded student engagement. This partnership with faculty has led to an average of more than 45 career services presentations per semester, preventing class cancellations while providing valuable career insights. As a result, the career center saw a 62% increase in scheduled appointments from 482 in spring 2022 to 782 in spring 2024.



IMPERATIVE #3

Building Classroom-to-Career Connection

Connecting classroom skills to future careers is essential to keep students engaged in their academic programs. In fact, most community college students (57%) [expect professors to help them](#)²³ prepare for a career and/or find a job after graduation. When students can clearly see how their coursework directly applies to real-world job opportunities, they feel a sense of purpose and motivation to succeed. Without this connection, students may struggle to understand the relevance of their studies, leading to disengagement and a loss of interest in continuing their education.

In fact, research shows that students who do not perceive a clear path from education to employment are [more likely to drop out or change majors](#).²⁴ By integrating career-focused learning, through internships, career simulations, or projects aligned with industry needs, educational institutions can help students envision how their academic efforts translate into tangible career outcomes. This sense of relevance encourages persistence, fosters enthusiasm for learning, and ultimately helps students achieve both academic success and career readiness.

Many community colleges are using technology, faculty partnerships, and employer relationships to make classroom-to-career connections clearer. Following are examples of ways EAB partners are helping students gain hands-on experience.

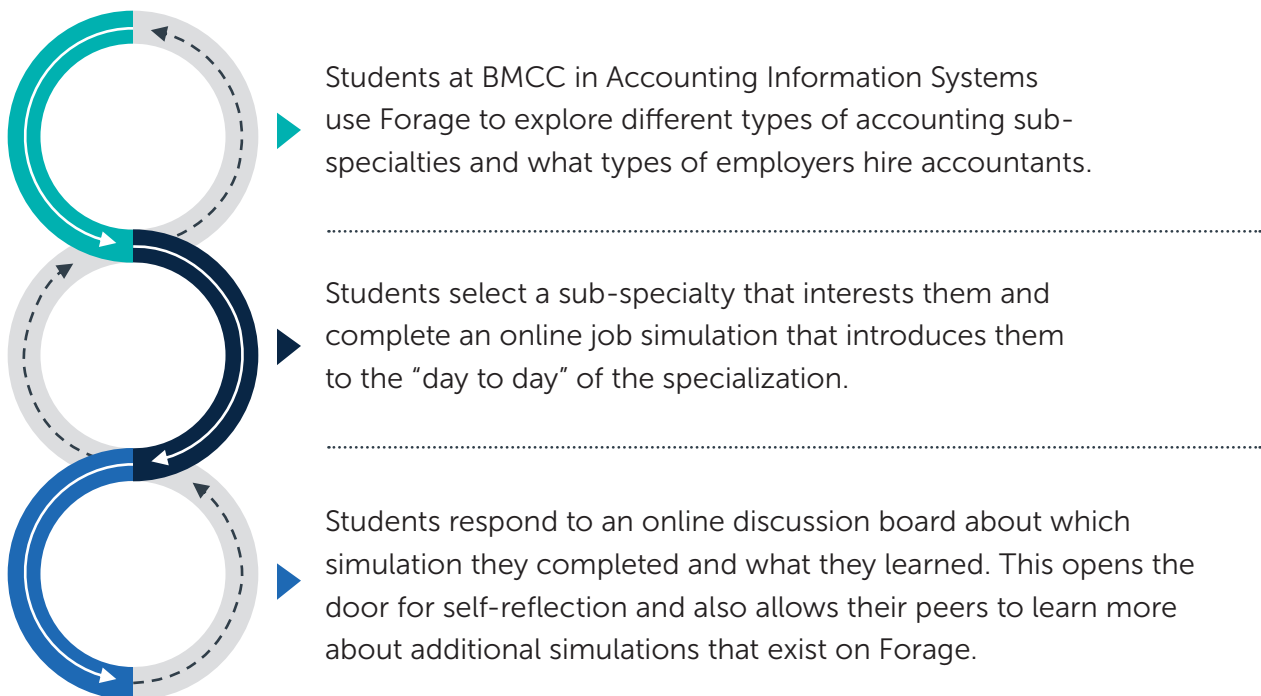


Forge Accounting Simulations



At BMCC, Forge’s career readiness modules are incorporated into sections of Accounting Information Systems to help students build professional communication skills and explore various career paths at their own convenience—which is important for time-strapped students.

The platform provides practical scenarios, guidance on email etiquette, and opportunities to explore diverse areas of accounting, such as tax and data analysis, while developing essential soft skills such as communication and time management. Students complete one of the modules based on which type of accounting they’re interested in and share by means of an online discussion board what they learned and found interesting. This group sharing allows their peers to learn more about different types of accounting and potentially leads them to complete more modules on their own.



Students can also explore modules on how to get hired—including guidance on resume writing, interviewing, and how to network.

Imperative #3: Building Classroom-to-Career Connection

The screenshot shows the Forage website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Forage logo, an 'Explore' button, and links for 'Blog', 'For Employers', and 'For Educators'. A 'Sign Up' button and a user profile icon are on the right. The main heading is 'Explore Forage', followed by the text 'Find the perfect job simulation or short course to build your skills and get noticed by recruiters.' Below this, there are two main sections: 'Job Simulations' and 'Shorts'. The 'Job Simulations' section includes a filter for 'Career Interest All' and 'Company All', and a checkbox for 'Show me new simulations'. It displays three simulation cards: 'PEPSICO Sales' (Introductory, 2-3 hours), 'AIG Claims' (Intermediate, 2-3 hours), and 'BANK OF AMERICA Global Markets Sales and Trading Analyst' (Introductory, 3-4 hours). The 'Shorts' section features a 'How To Get Hired' module with an illustration of people and a question mark, and a 'Bloomberg Essentials' module. A 'Get Started' button is visible in the 'How To Get Hired' module.

By incorporating these modules into the curriculum, BMCC enhances students' career readiness, providing opportunities to learn about jobs and skill sets they may not have encountered through traditional job exploration.



FutureReady Centers



The [FutureReady Centers](#) are a partnership between Wichita Public Schools and WSU Tech, designed to provide high school juniors and seniors with hands-on training in high-demand fields such as health care and manufacturing. Students remain enrolled in their current high schools while attending these centers on an alternating A/B schedule. The program is entirely free, covering tuition, transportation, and textbooks, and allows students to earn college credits while still in high school.

Each student is guaranteed a work-based learning internship, giving them practical

experience and direct exposure to industry environments. By combining classroom instruction with real-world experience, the FutureReady Centers help students graduate with industry-recognized credentials, thus preparing them better for immediate employment or further education.

Faculty and staff at WSU Tech use Navigate360 with FutureReady students for messaging, early alerts, and progress reports so students stay on track and get the support they need.



Marketable Skills Initiative



Dallas College has engaged 40 faculty members who teach core courses in its [Marketable Skills Initiative](#). These “faculty integrators” ensure that coursework incorporates key skills designed to bridge the gap between academic learning and the soft skills employers seek. By aligning the Core Curriculum with essential employability skills, the initiative helps both faculty and students clearly identify and communicate the competencies developed through coursework.

This approach addresses the “skills awareness gap,” ensuring students can effectively articulate

their abilities to potential employers. The program focuses on six key areas: Critical Thinking, Communication, Empirical and Quantitative Skills, Teamwork, Personal Responsibility, and Social Responsibility. Through this comprehensive framework, students strengthen their competency in the areas of problem-solving, communication, data analysis, collaboration, ethical decision-making, and community engagement.

“ I often think there is a disconnect between what students are working on in their academic lives and the skills they gain for their professional life, especially in ‘soft skills.’ Giving students the language to articulate these skills and understand the professional purposes of their academic pursuits is an important part of my pedagogy.”

[Natalie Pleimann, English, Dallas College](#)²⁵

Preparing for Tech Careers with Forage



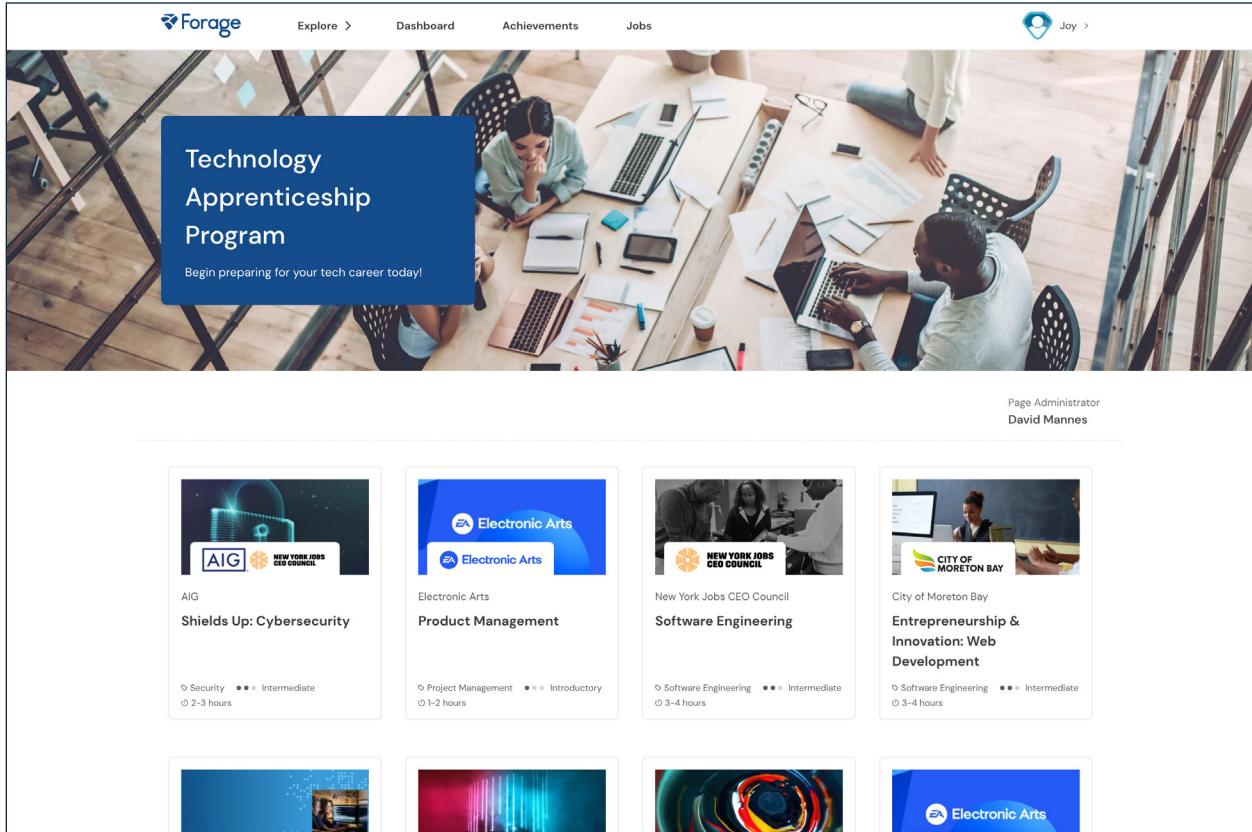
Queensborough Community College (QCC) partners with the New York CEO Jobs Council to offer a Technology Apprenticeship Program with affiliated Fortune 500 partner companies. Students accepted into this highly competitive program can launch their careers in software development, information technology, or cybersecurity, earning a family-sustaining wage with just an associate's degree. Thanks to funding from the Perkins V grant, QCC's career center has been able to employ a full-time specialist to support students applying for the apprenticeship program. This has allowed QCC to stand out as a model of program success, with 80% of QCC apprenticeship applicants being accepted for the spring 2024 cohort and 87.5% of those students going on to receive full-time offers following the program.

One key component of QCC's success in the apprenticeship program has been [Forage](#), an online platform that offers job simulations from leading companies. These simulations

enable students to build technical skills and gain insight into what employers expect in a professional setting. For many students, a [Forage simulation](#) is one of the first pieces of technical content they can add to their resumes. This can lead to a cumulative advantage for students, giving them a competitive edge in applying for early experiences (such as their first summer internships) that then provide an even stronger basis on which to apply for more prestigious programs such as the apprenticeship. Even for students who already have some tech experience, Forage remains a key tool for career exploration, helping students craft specialties for themselves ranging from Data Science to Full Stack Web Development. As such, Forage remains one of the first resources shared with the almost 1,000 students in QCC's computing majors when they initially show interest in the apprenticeship program.



Imperative #3: Building Classroom-to-Career Connection



Forage also strengthens the pipeline from training to employment, as several Jobs Council-affiliated employers—including Deloitte and JPMorgan Chase—offer job simulations on the platform. This alignment enables students to familiarize themselves with these companies’ expectations before entering an apprenticeship and demonstrate their passion for that particular company. Beyond benefiting students, Forage supports career services professionals by allowing staff to scale skill-building opportunities efficiently. This allows Forage to be easily integrated into strategic career development systems, as community college staff—such as those at QCC—strive to equitably meet the career needs of all students.



IMPERATIVE #4

Developing Workplace Entry Skills

Employers are seeing a decline in early career professionals who have mastered the art of resume writing, interviewing, and having a professional presence. This can hurt students as they prepare to transition out of a college and into the workforce—limiting their ability to both secure interviews and be successful in them. What’s encouraging is that students want help with these skills: When surveyed, almost [70% of students](#)²⁶ think career centers should offer resume development support, and almost 60% expect interview prep and mock interview services.

It’s hard to offer these services at scale when you have small teams, but using technology like Forage self-service modules and Navigate360 can help empower students and reduce administrative tasks such as appointment scheduling, receiving referrals from other departments, and messaging students at scale.

Asked which services career centers should offer, more than half of respondents identified these areas: résumé development (69%), career exploration (67%), recruitment events (64%), getting an internship (62%), interview prep or mock interviews (59%), networking (56%), and preparing for and succeeding in an internship (51%).²⁷

[Forty-two percent of students](#)²⁸ say successful job placement upon graduation best represents the value of higher education



Rappahannock Goodwill Industries Partnership

GERMANNA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Germanna Community College has established a partnership with Rappahannock Goodwill Industries (RGI) to enhance job placement and career development opportunities for students. As a leading workforce development nonprofit, RGI will serve as one of Germanna's job placement partners, supporting a cohort-based internship program and providing individualized career services.

Participants in the initiative, which will be launched in spring 2025, will complete three pre-internship workshops, engage in eight-week internships with a maximum of 20 hours per week, and be encouraged to seek employer-sponsored compensation of at least \$15 per hour.

In addition to internships, RGI will provide individualized job-matching services to participants nearing program completion and seeking full-time, career-aligned employment. RGI will work with these students to develop individualized employment plans, assess needs, and establish career goals. Additionally, RGI will assist Germanna in tracking internship and employment outcomes to measure the institution's regional economic and workforce impact.



Transition to Practice Program



The Transition to Practice Program helps Nursing and Allied Health students bridge the gap between academics and employment. This structured event brings together four to six health care employers in an interactive session that covers first-year employment programs, workplace culture, benefits, and more. Faculty ensure full student attendance, and a guided discussion with 10 key questions leads into an open Q&A, allowing students to engage directly with industry professionals.

Following the two-hour employer session, students have a 15–20-minute networking break to connect with employers, ask additional questions, and exchange business cards. Many employers stay longer for further conversations.

The event concludes with a career readiness session led by Career Services, including a resume and interview workshop, a Career Fair reminder, and encouragement to schedule career advising appointments using Navigate360.

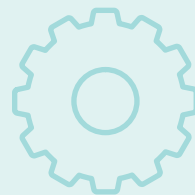
By combining direct employer engagement with essential career preparation, the Transition to Practice Program equips students with the knowledge, resources, and connections needed for a smooth transition into their professional roles.



5

Summary

As both students and the larger public demand to see stronger correlations between earning a college credential and securing a job, community colleges will need to think about how they improve career readiness and position themselves as leaders in social mobility. This is a challenge given the burden of small teams, difficulty hiring new staff, unreliable budgets, and students who need 1:1 support. By infusing technology into your career readiness strategy, teams can scale access to career supports, reduce administrative burdens, and spend more time with students.



How can Navigate360 and Forage help support career readiness efforts?

Eight ways Navigate360 can support career readiness efforts at community colleges:

- 1. Integrated Academic and Career Planning:** Navigate360 helps students align their academic pathways with career goals, ensuring they stay on track for both graduation and employment.
- 2. Early Alerts and Interventions:** Faculty and staff can identify students who may be struggling academically or falling behind on career milestones and intervene with timely support.
- 3. Streamlined Appointment Scheduling:** Navigate360 simplifies scheduling for career services meetings, reducing administrative burdens and ensuring students can easily access career guidance.
- 4. Enhanced Visibility Across Teams:** Faculty, advisors, and career services staff can collaborate more effectively by sharing insights into students' career progress, referrals, and meetings.
- 5. Automated Communication Tools:** Staff can send reminders, updates, and resources to students, keeping them engaged with career-related activities, events, and deadlines.
- 6. Customizable Career Milestones:** Colleges can establish key career planning touchpoints, ensuring students complete activities such as resume reviews, mock interviews, and job applications.
- 7. Data-Driven Insights:** Navigate360 provides analytics and reporting on student engagement with career services, helping colleges identify gaps and refine their strategies.
- 8. Reduced Administrative Workflows:** By automating tasks such as appointment follow-ups and tracking referrals, Navigate360 frees up staff time to focus on personalized career guidance and support.

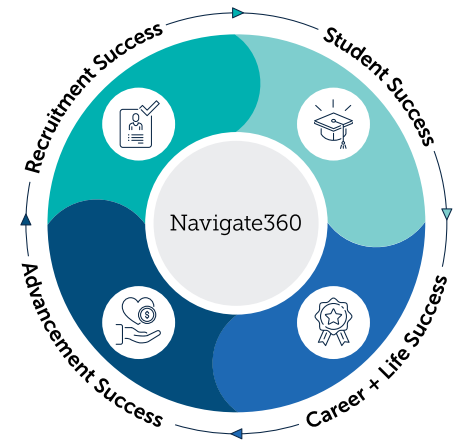
Five ways Forage can support career readiness efforts at community colleges:

- 1. Virtual Job Simulations:** Forage provides students with free, real-world job simulations designed by leading companies, allowing them to gain hands-on experience and explore different career paths before entering the workforce.
- 2. Skill Development:** Through practical, project-based tasks, students can develop in-demand skills that align with employer needs, making them more competitive in the job market.
- 3. Career Exploration:** Forage exposes students to various industries and roles, helping them make informed decisions about their career goals and understand what specific jobs entail.
- 4. Employer Connections:** By completing simulations created by top employers, students can showcase their skills, gain visibility with recruiters, and establish connections with potential employers.
- 5. Resume and Interview Readiness:** Completing job simulations gives students concrete examples of skills and experiences to include on their resumes and discuss in interviews, boosting their confidence and career readiness.

About Navigate360

Recruit, Retain, and Empower Students in College and Beyond

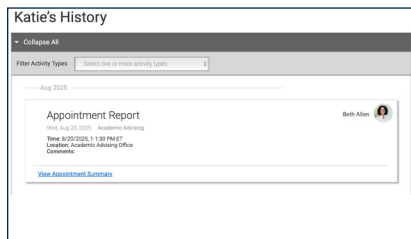
Navigate360 is the leading student CRM for community colleges, a powerful technology that unites administrators, faculty, staff, and students in a collaborative network that supports the entire student experience, from recruitment to career. Navigate360 is powered by over a decade of student success research honed from billions of student interactions—and now, it's also amplified by AI.



Staff Workflow and Automation

Empower staff to proactively engage with prospective and current students

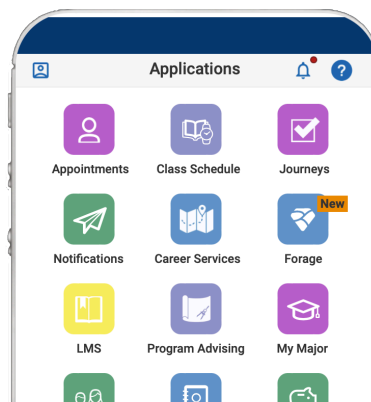
- ▶ AI Content, Campaign, and Student Insights Agents
- ▶ Complete Student Profile
- ▶ Coordinated Care Network
- ▶ Cases and Referrals
- ▶ Automated Alerts and Messaging
- ▶ Two-Way SMS
- ▶ Campaigns and Template Library
- ▶ To-Dos
- ▶ Appointments and Surveys
- ▶ Events
- ▶ Notes and Attachments
- ▶ Faculty Progress Reports
- ▶ Prospect Application Management



Student Engagement Hub

Provide your students with a one-stop shop for self-service resources

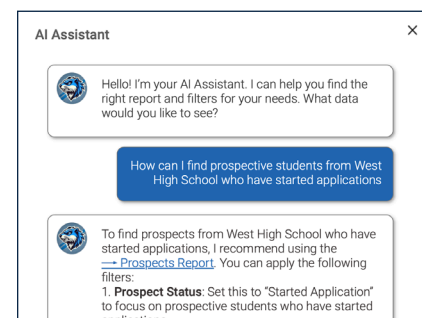
- ▶ AI Course Planning and Knowledge Agents
- ▶ iOS and Android Apps
- ▶ Student Success Network
- ▶ Campus Resources
- ▶ Appointment Scheduling
- ▶ Class Schedule
- ▶ In-App Messaging, Notifications, and Surveys
- ▶ Career Match and Journeys
- ▶ Study Buddies
- ▶ Financial Planner
- ▶ Prospect Portal



Reporting and Analytics

Proactively identify opportunities for better student support

- ▶ AI Report Agent
- ▶ Advanced Query Builder
- ▶ Data Visualizer
- ▶ Templated and Scheduled Reports
- ▶ Automated Workflow from Reports
- ▶ Population Health Analytics
- ▶ Activity Analytics
- ▶ Intervention Effectiveness Analytics
- ▶ Historical Analytics
- ▶ Predictive Model
- ▶ Analytics Data Exports



OUR PARTNERS

850+

Partner Institutions

10M+

Students Served

OUR IMPACT

3.5%

Typical improvement in graduation rate

5:1

ROI based on 500 partner value stories

▶ Schedule a Navigate360 demo at eab.com/Navigate360.

About Forage

Innovative Job Simulations Bridge the Gap Between Students and Employers

What Are Job Simulations?

Forage job simulations are self-paced, online learning programs that simulate the work performed in different roles at different companies through interactive, hypothetical tasks. Forage is free to students and schools.

Forage Simulations Are:

Educational and Immersive

Forage simulations bring roles and companies to life for learners.

Inclusive

There are no barriers to participation; simulations are 100% free for learners and educators.

Data-Driven

Learners can measure their performance on simulations, and employers can track engagement.

Scalable and Always On

Simulations are available on demand 24/7.

Forage job simulations connect students to great jobs.

Job simulations are innovative skill-building experiences designed in partnership with leading companies in industries including banking, consulting, and retail.

How Forage benefits your students:

Build confidence: Students better understand their major by experiencing what related careers are like.

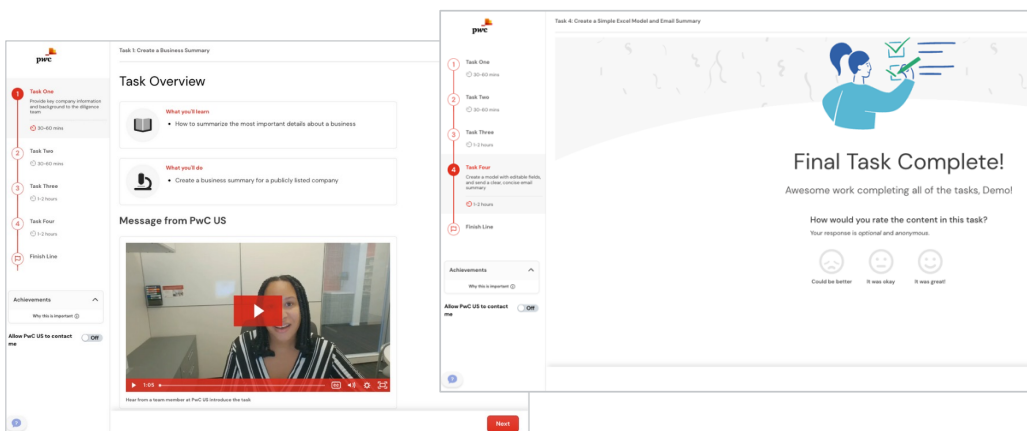
Build a resume: Students earn certificates after completing Forage job simulations.

Stand out to employers: Companies use Forage data to identify engaged and committed applicants.

How Forage benefits your institution:

Demonstrate your commitment to career success: Promoting Forage to students reflects your commitment to preparing them for the workforce.

Easily build skills into the curriculum: Educators can choose Forage simulations to feature on class-specific landing pages and track engagement.



Forage partners with leading employers across diverse industries

300+ Job Simulations

125+ Employers

Forage creates an inclusive path to successful early careers

4M students are using Forage to explore early careers globally

45% of Forage users identify as first-generation university students

3.3X On average, Forage users are 3.3x more likely to get a job offer

95% of Forage users say they better understand a company after completing a job simulation

► The Navigate360 student app links directly to Forage. Visit eab.com/Navigate360 to learn more.

Endnotes

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