

# ACCSC

Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges

## SPOTLIGHT ON EXCELLENCE



### By Facing Challenges Together, Four Schools Work Together Through COVID and Beyond

page 5

### What We Can Learn From Kindergarten

page 2

### Eye on the Prize - Platt College Riverside Prepares Students Early for Employability

page 4

### Vet Tech Students Get the Most Out of Their Externships - Despite the Pandemic

page 8

### The Job Club at UEI Bakersfield

page 9

### Platt College Anaheim Celebrates Opening of Occupational Therapy Assistant Lab

page 11



The mikeroweWORKS Foundation's  
2021 Work Ethic Scholarship Program  
is now open!

Spring 2021



## What We Can Learn From Kindergarten

*Michale S. McComis, Ed.D.*

I can remember dropping my children off on their first day of Kindergarten and the bundle of emotions I felt for each of them -- fear, trepidation, anxiety, relief, excitement, and anticipation to name but some. What I cannot know is how they felt on that first day or many of the days thereafter. But, what I do know is that first day and the many days thereafter were crucial to how well they were able to adjust, proceed, and succeed in school. Essentially, our system of school for children gives them an entire year of orientation to school – we call this Kindergarten. Kindergarten is crucial to the educational development of our children because part of the goal is to teach children how to learn and think critically, how to interact with peers and teachers, how to be good citizens and good neighbors, and overall how to be students and to succeed in school.

Reflecting back on how well this part of our educational system works for this important life transition, I believe we can use this as a model for students making another significant life transition – entry to college. This transition is no less fraught with new experiences, challenges, and content with which students must contend and we cannot assume that students entering a postsecondary program intuitively know how to handle this transition successfully. What we do know is that a significant percentage of students entering post-secondary vocational and career-oriented educational programs are first-time college students, and as such we should be providing them with the same kinds of tools for them to be successful as we do with our young children – but scaled up to college level. These familiar tools include: how to learn/study, how to interact with peers and faculty, how to be good citizens and good neighbors, how to be students, and how to succeed in school and in the workforce.



I speak with many school leaders and often ask if their schools have Orientation and the vast majority indicate, “Yes.” However, when I ask: “Is the Orientation an established curriculum with learning objectives across an array of crucial topics designed to assist students be successful in college?” the vast majority indicate, “No.” I have found that those schools that have a dedicated in-depth Student Orientation curriculum tend to have better focus on student retention and student success from day one. Helping your new college students with topics such as critical thinking, problem solving, goal setting, time management, study habits/skills, personal finance, how to use learning resources, and effective communication (with peers in class and faculty) are topics for which many students may need an introduction in order to meet the college’s expectations and to attain success in their studies. These topics can help students to be more self-sufficient and thus can also prove to lessen the stress on student and career services provided by the school.

By way of analogy, a school could not give a Cosmetology student or an Automotive Mechanic an incomplete set of tools – the “hard skills” – and expect them to be a successful technician. Why then would we not also give the right set of tools – the “soft skills” – to be a successful student. These topics will not only help students to be “better” students, but also help develop “Essential Workforce Skills” that can help make them more well-rounded employees. One of the chief requests by the employers is for students to come out of college with more “soft skills” and a well-designed and intentional Orientation programs can help to fill in these types of skills for your students.

Adding content in these areas does likely mean lengthening the program for content that is not eligible for credit. Institutions are offering more in-depth Orientation programs both front loaded, before the technical training begins, and integrated with the technical training spread out over a longer period of time. Your initial reaction to this article may be that such programs are a luxury or are cost prohibitive. But, based on my experience working with schools over the last 25 years, the same challenges for students persist in almost every category yet too often schools have not sought different routes to overcoming those challenges, instead feeling overwhelmed and changing little as a result. I would argue that the cost of doing nothing is far greater than the cost of doing something different. The institutional and reputational gains with regard to student retention and success are dividends enough to justify this kind investment in your students.



So, take a cue from how we teach our youngest and think about how to apply that same practice to your own school. Transitions are hard and giving students the right set of tools – such as an **Orientation Program** for new college students – may just be one of those differentiating characteristics that help propel your school to higher levels of success.

*Dr. McComis is the Executive Director of ACCSC.*

## Eye on the Prize -- Platt College Riverside Prepares Students Early for Employability

Yvonne Tolbert, Career Services Director, Platt College Riverside

Recently, Platt College Riverside conducted a virtual Employability Presentation for students in its Medical Administrative Specialist program. The response was overwhelmingly positive with both 100% attendance and 100% participation on the part of the class.

Led by Platt College Riverside's Career Services Advisor, Yvonne Tolbert, the presentation discussed the employment skills that recent graduates entering the workforce need to possess. Students also debated such engaging topics as, "Do you think employers consider hard skills to be 'useless' without soft skills" and went on to share different viewpoints using their current work experience examples.

"As discussed during the presentation, hard skills -- one's industry-specific measurable abilities -- are essential to opening the door to an interview. Hard skills are 'must haves.' While soft skills, especially when demonstrated during an interview, can greatly enhance the candidates' likelihood of being hired," explained Tolbert. "In the end, both hard skills and soft skills are equally important to land the job."

The discussion also entailed how recent graduate interviewees can address such sensitive interview questions as "Tell me about yourself," "Why did you leave your last job?" and "What salary are you seeking?"

"Many students agreed that they really struggle to answer the question, 'What salary are you seeking,'" said Tolbert. "They believed that their answers tended to ruin the job opportunity in its entirety and often felt forced to accept an offer that wasn't truly what they wanted." As the class discussed, the key to answering sensitive questions is preparing answers in advance. "It's really about the preparation prior to the interview," said Tolbert. "For instance, if a student has an idea of the salary they are seeking, they should go into the interview knowing competitive salaries in the market. By the

same token, in nearly every interview, the interviewer will ask the interviewee to describe their experience. This is something that can be easily developed and refined prior to the interview."

Last, students were reminded to take early advantage of such Career Services' resources as targeted resume writing assistance and mock interviews. We encourage students to submit their resumes as early as possible for review, suggestions, and to ensure that resume includes industry-specific employability skills. For our medical administrative specialists, for instance, those skills include software/medical software knowledge, advanced medical terminology, pharmacology, language skills, medical billing and coding, electronic medical records (EMR), and certifications, to name a few. We also encourage students to practice their interview skills early and often -- and develop their answers to the tough questions - - with our Career Services experts."



"The Employability Presentation teaches students that the best way to excel in an interview is to be confident," added Tolbert. "Students can become more confident in the interview by knowing what to expect, formulating answers to the tough questions in advance, and fine-tuning and polishing that resume and practicing the interview. The bottom line is that the more confident the student, the more likely they are to ace that interview and land the job!"

## By Facing Challenges Together, Four Schools Work Together During COVID and Beyond

In the spring of 2020, Sean Koomen, Chief Instructor at the Northwest School of Wooden Boatbuilding (Port Hadlock, Washington) reached out to similar marine-focused post-secondary schools around the country to work together to solve the riddle of how to teach “hands-on” during a pandemic. Koomen invited Jay Coogan at IYRS School of Technology and Trades (Newport, Rhode Island); Richard Downs-Honey at The Landing School (Arundel, Maine); and Nikki Storey at the Great Lakes Boat Building School (Cedarville, Michigan) to join himself and NWSWB Executive Director Betsy Davis for bi-weekly calls.



The idea was to pool intellectual resources and institutional knowledge as COVID altered the guidelines for these educational facilities. Meeting topics included pressing matters of safety protocols, class sizes, how to work with state and local governing bodies, how to effectively deliver online lectures, where to find federal assistance, and how to market to potential students in this new landscape.

“These are some of the most valuable meetings and exchanges of ideas I have as a leader of a boatbuilding school,” Jay Coogan, stated. “We share practical challenges and opportunities freely. Even though we are competitors to some degree we are also colleagues who want to advance opportunities for more people to enter the marine trades with the skills we impart.”

Over the year, the Four Schools’ meetings grew to include various discrete challenges that smaller schools, particularly those that cater to the marine industry, face. These discussions included sharing notes about Title IX updates, building better understanding about how best to comply with ACCSC regulations, identifying methods for widening their public relations and marketing through shared advertising and promotions, and combining professional development efforts for faculty.

“The four schools have been talking about every other week since April,” Koomen said. “We all face the



question with COVID. ‘How are we going to do hands-on teaching with the pandemic raging. There have to be others who are thinking about this too.’ That’s where this all started. Then slowly over the last 8-9 months it has evolved into other topics too.”

About two dozen instructors from the four schools have met twice via Zoom to share ideas about the unique challenges they face. Instructors share a remarkable dedication to serve the educational needs of a very diverse set of students: from veterans and career-changers, to retirees, and recent high school graduates. This new access to instructors from different parts of the country as a sounding board provides each school’s faculty the opportunity to talk about instructional challenges, such as the best techniques to address the range of specific learning styles their students bring to class.



“As an instructor...it felt like there was a hole where I couldn’t talk with all of you—other instructors,” Koomen said at the last faculty meeting. “I’d like to learn what you’re seeing and experiencing from your end, and what we can do to improve or collaborate on it.”

At a recent Four School faculty meeting, topics ranged from how the schools can stay relevant to industry, to the pros and cons of contemporary versus traditional methods, with the shared goal of ensuring graduates have the sets of skills they require to succeed.

“While this cooperation brings a valuable opportunity for continual improvement of our teaching, the larger benefit is that it moves us from seeing the other schools mainly as



competitors towards a constructive engagement and a realization that we are all educators with similar needs and daily challenges—and that we actually can help each other,” Hans Scholl, an instructor at IYRS, reports.

In their conversations, representatives of the schools share research findings on particular issues they’d taken responsibility for at a prior meeting, but there remains plenty of room to bring up

the most pressing new issues facing each school that week or month. The collaboration has resulted in well aligned COVID protocols and mitigation plans, shared concepts for widening admissions and recruiting, and working together to ensure the schools adhere to accreditation and compliance rules. It has also provided a chance to share support and humor over the range of challenges these schools face every day.

“We have been impacted by COVID-19 due to the inability to offer our ‘hands on instruction’ in a ‘hands off’ environment,” Nikki Storey adds. “In a serendipitous way, COVID has created an opportunity for our schools to become stronger through our collaborations.”

Together, the schools have discussed at length what distance learning programs work best for short-term COVID-related virtual classes. Their meetings led to an article in *Professional BoatBuilder* magazine, as well as a follow-up letter to the editor urging the marine industry to support these efforts. Additionally, all four schools will participate as a team in the online event “Mission Matters: Best Practices of High Achieving Institutions” with ACCSC’s Executive Director, Michale McComis, Ed.D.



“By working together, we all succeed,” Downs-Honey. “As a group, we have access to a bigger pool of information and experience. As they say, a rising tide lifts all ships.”

## Platt College Alhambra Vet Tech Students Get the Most Out of Their Externships – Despite the Pandemic

*Kristy Veltri, BS, RVT, Program Director of Veterinary Technology*

In March, Platt College Veterinary Technology (Vet Tech) program smoothly transitioned to remote learning due, in no small part, to the faculty's exceptional familiarity with Canvas LMS and the students' familiarity with accessing Canvas for class resources and assignments. The program will move to a hybrid learning model this month with online lectures and scheduled in-person, socially distanced labs. Externship partners, like Banfield Pet Hospitals, have also reworked their protocols to enable students to safely continue with externships.

To keep staff, clients, and externs safe, Banfield Pet Hospitals have eliminated in-room appointments and instead implemented a process where the client waits in the lobby while the client's pet is taken to the exam room to be evaluated and treated.

“Not being able to accompany one's animal into the examination room can create anxiety on the part of the client. After all, these are their beloved pets!” said Kristy Veltri, program director of the veterinary technology program at Platt College's Alhambra campus. “As a result of these new safety procedures, Banfield has really worked hard to bridge the communication gap between clients and staff in an effort to reduce client's anxiety levels.”

For instance, Banfield has developed online learning modules so externs can better develop their client engagement skills and other soft skills. “Student externs are encouraged by their Banfield coaches to go out and introduce themselves to the client of the patient

they're assisting in order to create a more personal experience for both the client and the student,” said Veltri. Banfield has also implemented a paid Student Ambassador Program (separate from the externship program), which employs a Vet Tech program student to help them organize student events, which also helps the student continue to develop such soft skills such as communicating information to a group, and creating and managing events.



*Two Platt College Alhambra students working with a patient at Banfield's radiographic lab.*

Banfield Pet Hospitals staff members also serve as guest speakers at Platt College before and after externships. In fact, beginning September 9, the Banfield team will be guest lecturing to new students entering the program in their Introduction to Veterinary Technology course on topics including opportunities in the field, animal safety, animal behavior and restraint.

So are the externships paying off for Platt College VT students? The answer is a resounding yes! “Many Platt College Veterinary Technology Program students are offered employment opportunities by their externship sites by the end of their program, and 74% of Platt College Alhambra's graduates are employed in the veterinary field according to ACCSC's 2019 Annual Report,” said Veltri.



## The Job Club at UEI Bakersfield

Chris Callisto, Campus President & Alexandra Ford, Director of Career Services

At UEI College in Bakersfield, California, the placement of our graduates is of great importance. Our mission is to drive personal and community transformation by empowering students to make a positive and enduring life change. Therefore, it is important that we provide our students and graduates with the tools they need to be ready for their future career after graduation. The Job Club is one of the many initiatives our Career Services team implemented to support the student's journey into a new career after graduation.

### **What is Job Club?**

Job Club is one of our career support tools geared towards graduates. Active students may also attend Job Club sessions as well. During Job Club sessions, graduates and students receive support with working on employment applications, obtaining job leads, and practicing interview questions. Our goal in supporting students is to help them get a head start on finding employment shortly after graduation. UEI College also welcomes former graduates that are no longer working to come in for support in updating their resume.

### **Job Club Schedule**

Job club is typically held Monday-Thursday at the campus from 12pm-1pm. Associates in our Career Services department rotate schedules to keep the Job Club sessions lively and interactive to promote continued attendance. The school also holds a special repeat Job Club session for graduates or students that are unable to attend during normal session times. We also hold open Job Club sessions on Fridays, when there are less students on campus due to class schedules.

### **Job Club Topics**

During Job Club sessions, there are reoccurring and important topics discussed and career preparation activities. For example, Job Club sessions are customized to the specific graduate's need. If a graduate has an upcoming job interview, the graduate will receive support with preparing for their upcoming job interview. Their support session would focus more on interview techniques, dressing for success, conducting mock interviews with the graduate, and additional activities to prepare them for the job.

### **Job Club Dress Code**

We do ask that the individuals to come dressed in their school uniform (e.g. scrubs) or professional business attire, if they are going directly the interview that day. For those not scheduled for a job interview yet, we discuss with them appropriate dress code so they are aware of expectations from employers in the field. We understand some students may face challenges and may not have business attire. Therefore, our campus has a clothing closet on-site containing donated scrubs and business/interview attire just for this reason because we want to support our students in their career journey. Students and graduates may try on and utilize any items necessary in order to prepare for an encounter with an employer or job interview.



## *The Job Club at UEI Bakersfield*

### **Job Club Tools**

Providing support with job leads is a priority at our college. Job leads are sent to graduates with important information about the employment vacancy, including contact information and links on how and where to apply. We have a file on campus for each graduate with their portfolio that contains their resume, letters of recommendation, employment cover letters, and copies of other relevant employment documentation that we provide to the graduate. The portfolio also includes any additional employment related documents the graduate needs or had to create with the support of the college.

At UEI College, we recognize there are many institutions that have a wide array of career support that caters to student needs. We too have a wide array of support tools and process. However, we wanted to take the time to share with others the most basic process we have in place that is effective in helping students with their career training and career journey.

## Platt College Anaheim Celebrates Opening of New Occupational Therapy Assistant Lab

Lab features industry-standard technology and offers students simulated real-world training environments

Natalie Ang, Doctor of Occupational Therapy, OTD, OTR/L Occupational Therapy Program Director

Featuring industry-standard therapy equipment and technology, Platt College Anaheim's new Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) lab offers a simulated real-world training environment for the college's new, 20-month OTA associate degree program that launched in early August.

"We are so proud of this lab and the training opportunities that we are able to offer our OTA students through this unique facility," said Natalie Ang, Platt College Anaheim's occupational therapy assistant program director. "Gone are the days when patients would spend weeks rehabilitating in a hospital. Today, most patients spend a few days in the hospital and are sent home to recover. This new lab simulates those real-world environments where clients live and work, like a kitchen or a workplace, so our OTAs learn how to help clients live better in their actual surroundings."



Platt College Anaheim's Home Health Lab

The lab is comprised of the following:

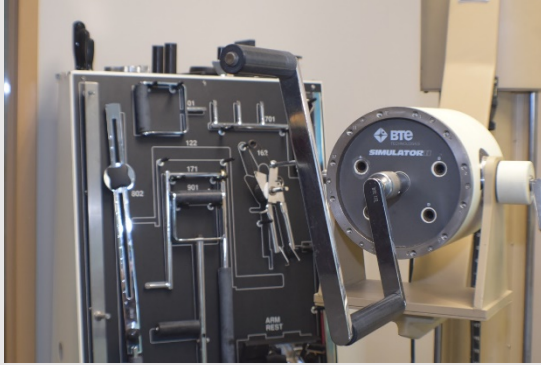
- **Home Health Lab** Simulating an actual apartment, this lab includes a kitchen, dining room/work area, living area and bathroom. "This lab is a highly functional space which is ideal for OTA training," said Ang. "Students are able to get a picture of how to work with clients in the actual setting where clients spend most of their time — at home.
- **Simulated Cafe and Marketplace** This lab simulates the places where clients spend time outside the home — like restaurants and stores.
- **Hand Therapy Lab** This lab is fashioned after an actual hand therapy clinic where students learn the latest hand therapy techniques. "Hand injuries are very common," remarked Ang. "We believe having experience with the specific hand equipment will be a differentiator of Platt College Anaheim OTA program graduates."
- **Pediatric Lab** The Pediatric Lab features swings, a rock wall, rope wall and a ball pit, and is furnished with rubber flooring conducive to working with children on the floor.
- **Outdoor Raised Garden Beds** The outdoor gardens teach students techniques to work with clients outdoors.



Platt College Anaheim's OTA instructor works in campus' Pediatric Lab

The Hand Therapy Lab equipment includes:

**BTE Work Simulator** — The BTE Work Simulator replicates a wide range of real-world job and daily living functions and is designed for use with occupational therapy exercises. “With this machine, our students practice a technique called “work hardening” which simulates a client’s work movements so the OT/OTA can determine if and when a client is healthy enough to return to work.”



Platt College Anaheim's BTE Work Simulator

**SaeboGlove** — The SaeboGlove is a high-tech orthosis that allows an impaired arm and hand to regain function by enabling extension of the fingers and hand.

Importantly, students in the program gain the specific experience to enable them to sit for the Certified Ergonomics Assessment Specialist exam and Certification in Autism exam.

“Students choose to become OTAs because they want to help clients of all ages live full and vibrant lives by promoting health, and preventing – or living better with – injury, illness or disability,” said Ang. “Together with our OTA coursework, this lab will well prepare our students to work in real-world settings and clinics, and most importantly, learn how to to help their clients live better lives.”

**Overhead Balance Trainer** — The Overhead Balance Trainer stabilizes a client who may have balance issues and enables students to **safely** work with clients on other specific activities.



Platt College Anaheim OTA instructor demonstrates the lab's SaeboGlove



# BACK TO WORK



## WORK ETHIC SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM



# APPLY NOW



THE S.W.E.A.T. PLEDGE  
[Skill & Work Ethic Aren't Taboo]

1. I believe that I have won the greatest lottery of all time. I am alive. I walk the Earth. I live in America. Above all things, I am grateful.

### Each year, we recognize people willing to work smart AND hard.

The Work Ethic Scholarship Program is about recognizing people who understand the importance of work ethic, personal responsibility, delayed gratification, and a positive attitude. These are hardworking men and women who will keep the lights on, water running, and air flowing. These are people who show up early, stay late, and bust their asses day in and out. These are the people we want to reward.



### To apply for a work ethic scholarship, there are some hoops to jump through. The short version is:

- Enroll in an approved program.
- Sign the S.W.E.A.T. Pledge.
- Answer 4 questions about the S.W.E.A.T. Pledge.
- Make a video.
- Have 2 solid references from a teacher or boss.
- Verify your school costs.
- Provide high school or college transcript.
- Submit your most recent 1040 tax form.

### ELIGIBLE TRADE PROGRAMS

AUTOMOTIVE TECHNOLOGY | AVIATION TECHNOLOGY | CARPENTRY  
 COMMERCIAL DRIVING | CONSTRUCTION | DIESEL TECHNOLOGY  
 ELECTRICAL TECHNOLOGY | EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY  
 FARMING & AGRICULTURE | FIRE SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY | HEAVY  
 EQUIPMENT OPERATION | HVAC MACHINERY | MANUFACTURING  
 MARINE TECHNOLOGY | PIPEFITTING | PLUMBING | WELDING



[mikeroweworks.org](http://mikeroweworks.org)

DEADLINE 5/6

# About ACCSC's Spotlight on Excellence

Welcome to *Spotlight on Excellence*, an online publication to highlight innovation and best practices being implemented by ACCSC-accredited schools to better support today's students. ACCSC knows that innovative and exciting projects are happening every day at our schools. Through this platform, we hope to provide an opportunity for our schools to share best practices with each other as a means to support student success in the workforce.

## Tell Us Your Story

ACCSC will be accepting submissions due on the 1<sup>st</sup> business day of every quarter (i.e., January, April, July, and September). Contributors must be from an ACCSC-accredited school. Submit posts 400-800 words in length in the body of an email to [events@accsc.org](mailto:events@accsc.org). Please include a brief bio in your submission. We reserve the right to edit your submission once accepted. We are not able to accept every post or submission shared with us.

## Contributors Guidelines

### Who is the audience?

The audience for *Spotlight on Excellence* is ACCSC-accredited schools and their leadership, faculty, students, employers, and other constituents in their communities.

### What topics does *Spotlight on Excellence* cover?

The primary focus of this publication is innovation. Within that, we focus on ways to support and mitigate challenges that affect today's students and their success in postsecondary education and ultimately the workforce.

Here are topics of particular interest to us:

- Student-Centered Approaches to Teaching and Skill Development
- Soft Skills/Workforce Skills Development
- Student-Centered Student Services
- Faculty Development
- Industry and Employer Partnerships
- Articulations Agreements and Transfer of Credit
- Technology in the Classroom
- Dual Enrollment with Secondary Schools
- Changing student demographics
- Community Service

ACCSC will be accepting submissions due on the 1<sup>st</sup> business day of every quarter (i.e., January, April, July, and September). Contributors must be from an ACCSC-accredited school. Submit posts 400-800 words in length in the body of an email to [events@accsc.org](mailto:events@accsc.org) and please include a brief bio and any pictures that might enhance your submission.

### What is the appropriate tone and style?

ACCSC will concentrate on posts that show innovation and initiative, are student-centered, have been implemented successfully, and align with **ACCSC's mission to ensure quality education that enhances Student Success in the Workforce.** We expect that pieces will have correct spelling, grammar and punctuation. Pieces that appear to use inflammatory language or inappropriate language will not be considered.



Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges