Cradle-to-Career Data and Tools Advisory Board Public Proposal Form

Instructions:

Per the Governance Manual proposal forms submitted will address significant gaps regarding whether the data system is providing access to actionable information. Please note there should only be one proposal per form.

Name:

David Radwin

Proposal Title: *no more than 50 characters*

Community College Certificate Requirements (Length)

- ☑ By checking this box, I understand that if a Data and Tools Advisory Board member sponsors my proposal, it will be considered as a submission from the Data and Tools Advisory Board member.

Type of Proposal[1]:

- ☐ Changes to tools such as dashboards or practical tools *(Complete section one)*
- ☑ Adding data points not available through the P20W data set or adjusting (including the removal of) the existing P20W data points *(Complete section two)*
    - Please note a proposal form(s) can recommend adding one data point or several clearly related data points to the data system.

[1] The C2C Governance Manual notes that DTAB members can also submit recommendations related to the data request process. As this is not yet live, it has been removed from the version of this form.

Section One: Changes to Dashboards or Practical Tools

1.What is the nature of the gap regarding access to actionable information?

2. What type of tool should be developed?

3. How would a tool address the gap?

4. Who would be the likely user(s) of the tool?

5. How does the tool relate to the mission and vision of C2C?

Section Two: Adding Data Points Not Available Through the P20W Data Set or Adjusting the Existing P20W Data Points

1.Please state the research question of interest that cannot be fully addressed with the existing data elements in the P20W Data System.

Which Californians complete undergraduate certificates of various lengths, and how is certificate length associated with subsequent educational experiences (e.g., stacking credentials, subsequent enrollment in degree programs, transfer), workforce outcomes (e.g., employment, full-time employment, earnings), health outcomes, and use of means-tested social services (CalWORKs, CalFresh, Medi-Cal)?

2. How does this research question relate to the mission and vision of C2C?

Disaggregating community college certificates by length is crucial for supporting evidence-based decision-making such as determining which

certificates to offer, estimating their value in the workplace, and determining an appropriate amount of financial aid for different types of certificate programs. These questions are especially timely as Congress recently expanded Pell Grant eligibility to very-short-term programs (i.e., certificates of less than six months) despite scant evidence of their effects on employability or earnings, long-standing concerns about provider integrity, and the prospect of it leading to wider racial stratification. (For example, see Bitar, J., Perez, S., Reese, S., and Elliott, M. (November 19, 2024). *Understanding the full cost of short-term credentials*. EdTrust. https://edtrust.org/rti/understanding-the-full-cost-of-short-term-credentials; Whistle, W., and Fishman, R. (May 7, 2025). *The bad policy that won't die and has gotten worse: Short-term Pell*. New America. https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/the-bad-policy-that-wont-die-and-has-gotten-worse-short-term-pell)

At present, C2C collects undergraduate certificate completions from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) but not the length of certificates in terms of credit or clock hours required to complete. Certificate length is a critical characteristic that can meaningfully affect such measures as time to completion and the earnings premium potentially associated with completion.

With few exceptions, bachelor's degrees require 120 semester credit hours and associate's degrees require 60 semester credit hours, equivalent to four years and two years of full-time enrollment, respectively. Certificate requirements, by contrast, can and do vary by orders of magnitude. The most recent college transcript study by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), which analyzed transcripts of more than 16,000 first-time beginning postsecondary students, found that completed certificates ranged from 0.21 semester credit hours to 120 semester credit hours (https://nces.ed.gov/datalab/codebooks/by-variable-name/53-beginning-postsecondary-students-2004-2009#QCRTREQ, variable QCRTREQ). Completion times are moderately correlated with certificate lengths. Among community

college students who completed certificates, the median time to completion was 16 months for the lowest quartile of certificate length (less than 19 credits) compared with 28 months for the highest quartile of certificate length (45 or more credits) (Radwin, D., & Matthews, M. (2013). *Characteristics of certificate completers with their time to certificate and labor market outcomes* (NCES 2013-157), table 4. National Center for Education Statistics, US Department of Education.)

3. Please propose additional data element(s) needed in order to successfully address the research question of interest.

Requirements to complete each community college certificate and the units of measure used (semester credit hours or clock hours). (Quarter credit hours, used by a handful of community colleges, can be converted to semester credit hours if not already converted. Researchers can equate values using 1 semester credit hour to 30 clock hours per 34 CFR 668.8(l) or a preferred specification.)

4. Please verify that the proposed data element(s) do not already exist in the P20W Data System.

Verified in communication from C2C staff dated October 29, 2024.

5. If the P20W Data System does not currently include the proposed data element(s), can the proposed data element(s) be derived from the existing data element(s) in the P20W Data System?

No.

6. If the P20W Data System does not currently include the proposed data element(s), are there existing data element(s) closely related to the proposed data element(s)? If so, please list them and why they are not sufficient to answer the proposed research question.

As noted above, there is no way to determine how many credits each

undergraduate certificate requires.

7. C2C keeps a repository of previous data elements that were either a) considered during the planning process or b) proposed through the mechanisms as outlined in the Governance Manual, but were ultimately not included in the P20W, along with related feasibility studies. Do any of the data element(s) being proposed overlap with the data elements in this repository? (New proposals can build on or duplicate prior proposals. It is helpful for proposers to share that context, including prior related feasibility studies.)

No.

8. Are the proposed data element(s) already collected by a state-level entity? For data element(s) already collected, please answer question nine. For data element(s) not collected, please answer question ten.

Yes, by the CCCCO. Ideally this proposal would also include certificates awarded by the California State University (CSU) Professional and Continuing Education programs and the University of California (UC) Extension programs (their non-state-supported operations), but these systems do not appear to collect these data.

9. [For proposed data element(s) already collected] To the extent possible, please share details pertaining to the proposed data element(s). Relevant details may include but are not limited to: a) corresponding entity that collects and houses the data element(s); b) specific variable name(s) used in the originating data system; and c) timeframe available.

The CCCCO Management Information System collects credit certificate requirements in six categories of semester units and noncredit certificates in eight categories of clock hours in the variable SP02 (https://webdata.cccco.edu/ded/sp/sp02.pdf). These categories have been stable since 2019-20.

10. [For proposed data element(s) not collected] Please propose institution(s) that would be most suited for the new data collection effort.

Although not part of this proposal, we encourage the CSU and UC systems to collect certificate completion, disaggregated by requirements or length, for future addition to C2C.

11. Please explain the desired level(s) of grain size for each data element proposed. (i.e., individual-level, institution-level, or other aggregated levels)? Multiple grain sizes may be requested for each proposed data element.

This element would apply to each community college certificate awarded to each Californian. That is, if an individual earned three community college certificates, she would also have different certificate length values.

12. Please explain the intended use case(s) for the proposed data elements (i.e., dashboards, query builder, or the research request tool)? Multiple use cases may be requested for each proposed data element.

This element would be beneficial to all use cases that include postsecondary completion. Research questions in this vein might include:

- Which Californians complete certificates of varying lengths?
- How many dual-enrolled high school students complete short- and long-term certificates?
- How do average and median time to completion vary by certificate length?
- How many Californians stack combinations of certificates of varying lengths, and how does the total length compare with requirements for completing an associate's degree?
- How is completion of certificates of varying length associated with subsequent educational experiences (e.g., enrollment for credit, total credit accumulation, credential attainment), workforce outcomes (e.g., employment, full-time employment, earnings), health outcomes, and use of means-tested social services (CalWORKs, CalFresh, Medi-Cal)?

- Within the same general field of study, how do subsequent employment outcomes vary between short-, medium-, and long-term certificate completers and associate's degree completers?
- Considering the net price of attendance after grants, what is the return on investment for short-, medium-, and long-term certificates in the same field of study, and how do these compare with the ROI for associate's degrees?
- For certificates of varying length, how do time to completion and postcompletion outcomes vary by whether the program is fully in-person, fully online, or a hybrid format?
- Given that the shortest certificates can be completed in a matter of hours, is there a minimum certificate length that could be justified as having employment value for counting toward state and regional attainment goals?

For dashboards, the certificate length measure might be collapsed to three or four meaningful categories each for credit and noncredit certificates. As one example, NCES's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System collects and reports undergraduate certificate completions in four categories: (1) less than 9 semester credit hours or 300 clock hours, (2) 9-29 semester credit hours or 300-899 clock hours, (3) 30-59 semester credit hours or 900-1799 clock hours, and (4) at least 60 credit hours or 1800 clock hours.