
What is the Center for Research on College-Workforce Transitions?

CCWT was launched in 2017 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison at a time when student employability, economic mobility, and skills gaps were dominating debates about the purpose of higher education. In the ensuing years, the notion of career readiness has become even more prominent, making college-workforce transitions one of the most influential issues shaping policy and practice in postsecondary education. Yet we still know relatively little about how students themselves are experiencing these transitions, and whether our colleges and universities are providing adequate support systems for students' post-graduate success.

With the continuing impacts of the pandemic, structural inequality, and the climate emergency posing serious challenges to students' ability to thrive and succeed – particularly those historically marginalized in the labor market - **developing student-centered strategies for career readiness is a critical national concern**. For colleges and universities to provide effective, culturally responsive support systems for developing their students' career readiness, they'll need rigorous research evidence, training and technical assistance, and new ways of thinking to guide their programs. We also contend that to truly develop effective programs and solutions, critical approaches questioning the "status quo" are essential.

Thus, the mission of CCWT is to develop research tools, evidence, and educational programs that promote the career development and wellness of students as they seek post-graduate success. In this work, CCWT seeks to amplify the voices and interests of students of all ages, especially those historically marginalized in higher education, with the ultimate aim of facilitating institutional and societal change.

CCWT's work centers on three key areas:

- 1 Conduct and support applied research:** CCWT is actively engaged in conducting research on work-based learning, socio-cultural and psychological aspects of career development, and the cultural nature of skills. Our interdisciplinary research team is dedicated to generating high-quality academic research while also ensuring that findings are disseminated to practitioner audiences in accessible and actionable formats.
- 2 Developing new research tools and frameworks:** CCWT creates tools, such as: the National Survey of College Internships; mixed-method tools for measuring students' career-related Community Cultural Wealth; culturally responsive approaches and psychosocial tools for supporting students' career-related well-being; and strategies to embed career readiness across the curriculum. CCWT staff also provide workshops on how to apply these frameworks and programs on your own campus.
- 3 Hosting educational programs and events:** CCWT regularly hosts webinars, seminars, and events to facilitate debate and share cutting-edge research on critical issues in the college-workforce arena. These events have included 2 on-campus symposia on internship research, over 40 lectures or webinars, and an Early Career Scholars and Undergraduate Research program where we mentor the next generation of scholars engaged in this critical work.



What projects are based at CCWT?

The Network and Cultural Assets (NCA) Project

The NCA project is designed to counter deficit-based narratives that explain students of color under-representation in the workforce by emphasizing what skills or resources students lack. Instead, NCA focuses on the cultural assets that students bring to their college experience by mapping social networks, measuring their community cultural wealth, and tracking changes in their professional identities. NCA is led by Dr. Nidia Bañuelos, Dr. Ross Benbow, and Kyoungjin Jang-Tucci in collaboration with the University of Texas System Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP).



Dr. Nidia Bañuelos



Dr. Ross Benbow



Kyoungjin Jang-Tucci

Supporting Student Mental Health, Wellness, & Career Readiness: Tuned In Labs

As the Covid-19 pandemic has revealed, thriving in the contemporary workplace requires psychological tools to support well-being and resiliency, particularly for historically marginalized students. The Tuned In Labs project seeks to broaden discussions of career readiness to include psycho-social skill development by training students in career development, navigating the world of work, and engaging in wellness management. Co-designed by faculty and students in counseling and vocational psychology, this project is creating research-based interventions and survey instruments that campuses can adopt and adapt to support their students. Tuned In Labs is led by Drs. Mindi Thompson and Pa Her and includes student scholars Joi Brown, Nasitta Keita, Michael Sanchez, and Kevon Williams.



Dr. Mindi Thompson



Dr. Pa Her



Joi Brown



Nasitta Keita



Michael Sanchez



Kevon M. Williams

The National Survey of College Internships & The College Internship Study

The College Internship Study and the NSCI are mixed-methods, longitudinal studies designed to capture the prevalence, quality, and equitable access of college internship programs. Launched in 2018, the studies have amassed a large dataset of student experiences during the pandemic, yielding critical insights into this “high-impact” practice. The NSCI is led by Dr. Matthew Hora in collaboration with the Strada Education Network, and ongoing analyses of our datasets are led by Dr. Hora, Dr. Thompson, Alexandra Pasqualone, and Tamanna Akram.



Dr. Matthew T. Hora



Alexandra Pasqualone



Tamanna Akram

Career & Climate Readiness across the Curriculum

Between 2016-2020 CCWT investigators documented how “soft” skills like communication and innovation are deeply shaped by cultural aspects of the professions, identities (e.g., race, class), and task situations, but are rarely taught in this manner in postsecondary courses. These skills are also regularly cited as essential for not only career success, but for future generations to address the climate emergency and crises of democracy. In response, CCWT has developed an online faculty development course and workshops that train instructors in how to incorporate transferable skills into their courses, and how institutional stakeholders can embed these skills and experiential learning across the curriculum in a student-centered way.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

Check out our website for internship and job opportunities, lectures and events, and more!
ccwt.wisc.edu

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