



EDSHARE[®] AT WORK

SCHOOL TO WORK: LASSEN CONNECTS THE DOTS WITH EDSHARE GRANT

Usually the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. So when Lassen Community College applied for an EDSHARE grant two years ago, the pitch was straightforward: To help students avoid defaulting on loans, make sure they can earn a paycheck after college by building the kind of résumé that employers pay attention to.

In Lassen County, with few large-scale employers, getting a job isn't just a matter of graduating with a degree. "We wanted to give these students practical work experience so that they could be competitive when there are openings," says Sandy Beckwith, project director for a work-study program created with the help of EdSHARE grant funds.

Under the program, Sandy matches students who are on the CalWorks assistance program with work-study jobs at local businesses. The employers have an in-



centive to participate because the EDSHARE funds are used to subsidize 75 percent of the student's salary.

"Our hope is that the employer will train the student, begin to value them as an employee and then—when they are notified that the grant has run out—make the transition to hiring the student permanently," Sandy says.

So far, the theory is turning into reality. One success story is that of a single mom in the accounting associate degree program. As she worked on her degree, she was placed in a position with an apartment management firm; after nine months, she parlayed the good reputation and contacts

she developed there into a management position with a new storage company that came to town. Soon after, she became an assistant manager in a new branch office for a bank. "She has a great job, a good income and is well-situated to pay back her student loan," Sandy says.

Another student was placed with a law firm while she pursued her legal secretary certificate. The lawyers were so pleased with her work that when their secretary left, they gave her the job. She continues to work on the certificate part time while the full-time job allows her to support herself and her child—and puts her in a good position to repay her student loan when the time comes.

The program can match eight to 10 students per year with a job; in the first two years, 16 participated. The program also involves a strong dose of financial management advice, with participants required to meet with Financial Aid Director Connie Barton to develop a good budget and debt management plan.

"It's a small program but a very important one for an area of the state where students have so few choices," Sandy says. "The EDSHARE grant allows us to make a difference in their lives." ✨

~ Kathy Beasley