



PRESS RELEASE

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Leading Healthcare Union Training Fund Announces Partnership with New On-line Community College

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – The SEIU-UHW Joint Employer Education Fund (Education Fund), striving to improve economic mobility for workers and help employers fill in-demand jobs, today announced its support for Gov. Brown's proposed online community college. The Education Fund will partner with the college to develop a credential program for workers to advance into the field of medical coding, the first program pathway selected for the online college.

"Partnering with the Education Fund will result in career advancement and wage gain for workers and will meet a need that our state's healthcare system is struggling to address," said California Community Colleges Chancellor Eloy Ortiz Oakley. "The online community college, our 115th college, is gaining momentum and structure with strong collaboration involving organized labor, employers, regional partners and faculty. We will continue to add career pathways in healthcare and other industry sectors."

"The Education Fund is excited about the potential of building on partnership with the community colleges in California. The new online college will allow us to create and deliver an affordable and accessible high-quality education that is ideally suited to our working learners," said Rebecca Hanson, executive director of the Education Fund

The SEIU-UHW Joint Employer Education Fund is a partnership between labor (100,000 SEIU eligible members and affiliated unions) and management (18 employers) dedicated to changing the lives of healthcare workers, by accelerating their careers through education, skills training and career advice.

Dignity Health and Optum 360 have pledged their support in the development of healthcare curriculum for medical coders, and the Education Fund believes many of other employer sponsors will also be committed partners.

"California's new online community campus has the potential to open up real avenues of opportunity for workers," said Alma Hernández, Executive Director, SEIU California. "If we do this right, healthcare workers, early education workers, caregivers and many other workers will have the ability to advance their careers through high quality, supportive study programs that fit their demanding schedules and that are affordable."

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The new online college will help stranded workers have struggled to obtain credentials to get ahead in today's economy. The first program pathway will serve working adults who want additional skills and credentials in the field of medical coding and require the flexibility of a competency-based, online training model that removes barriers to their success such as work schedules, transportation challenges and family obligations.

"I am a single mother with two kids, and I commute two hours a day to work as a patient registration representative. This online community college will allow me to fit school into my schedule and budget and advance in my career so I can provide a better life for my family." Lorraine Maisonet, a SEIU-UHW member.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, medical coding jobs are projected to grow by 15 percent through 2024, more than twice the average for all occupations.

Medical coding is a critical middle-skill level job that is transforming healthcare and pays a median hourly wage of \$32 in California for union members – with some earning more than \$50 per hour at the peak of their careers. It also provides a step-up in earnings for entry-level workers in related roles, such as medical assistants and information clerks. For-profit colleges currently deliver 80 percent of the medical coding certificates in California.

The online program, whose fees will be in line with the low-cost options available at other community colleges, will allow working learners to earn their credentials in a flexible and personalized manner so they can keep their current jobs and continue to support their families. The college will operate with unionized faculty and staff just as at other community colleges, Oakley said.

This new partnership teams one of the largest union training funds for healthcare workers in the western United States, with more than 100,000 frontline caregivers, and the largest system of higher education in the country. More career pathways available through the online college will be announced in the coming weeks.

The college will start enrolling students at the end of 2019. To learn more about the online community college, go to www.cconlinecollege.org.

The California Community Colleges is the largest system of higher education in the nation composed of 72 districts and 114 colleges serving 2.1 million students per year. Community colleges supply workforce training, basic skills education in English and math, and prepare students for transfer to four-year institutions. The Chancellor's Office provides leadership, advocacy and support under the direction of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges. For more information about the community colleges, please visit <http://californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/>, <https://www.facebook.com/CACommColleges>, or <https://twitter.com/CalCommColleges>.