



SparkPoint at Skyline College

In 2010, Skyline College in San Bruno, California, a demographically diverse postsecondary institution, introduced the Center for Working Families (CWF) approach with the opening of SparkPoint¹ at Skyline College (SPSC).

Populations Served

Each year, SPSC serves nearly 1,000 students at the college, their families and members of the broader San Mateo County community whose household incomes fall below the county's financial self-sufficiency standard.

Skyline College students and families represent approximately 80 percent of the clientele and are the principal users of SPSC's coaching and other intensive services. Clients who are not students usually come to SPSC for food from the pantry or open-air community market.

Many clients receive only one service. However, to be considered a CWF participant (or, in SPSC terms, a measurable client), an individual must work with a coach to set goals and commit to pursuing them. SPSC serves an estimated 200 measurable clients each year.

Service Delivery Methods

Although SparkPoint at Skyline College maintains a website, San Mateo community members generally hear about its services through word of mouth or by visiting a SPSC food pantry — often the first point of entry for individuals who later become measurable clients. Based on their needs and interests, community members will be referred to an academic or administrative staff member, financial coach or benefits counselor.

Clients who receive coaching on more than one service have better outcomes. Therefore, to help clients achieve financial stability, SPSC coaches and counselors aim to provide more than one financial coaching, benefits-access or education-and-workforce service to individuals within the same year.

For student clients, SPSC also provides academic support, including educational and career counseling, to help improve their chances of earning a degree or vocational certificate.

Overall, about 85 percent of the Skyline students who are measurable clients engage in financial coaching services, including many students ages 18 to 19 who are in college for the first time. For these students, initial sessions with the financial coach often focus on basic financial literacy: developing a personal budget, establishing a bank account, learning how loans work and obtaining a credit score.

SPSC administers and works with students in the college's Grove Scholars Program, which offers scholarships for up to two semesters for career and technical-education programs. Participants are required to meet twice a semester with both a SparkPoint financial coach and a career counselor. SPSC also delivers financial planning services to students in Skyline's Promise Scholars Program, which provides two years of full financial support for full-time students earning a degree or certificate.

Lessons and Adaptations

Lessons and adaptations from SparkPoint at Skyline College include the following:

- SPSC has implemented an incentive program for clients who take steps to improve their financial behavior, modeled on a similar program at SparkPoint at Cañada College in Redwood City, California.
- After initially moving the college's Career Center to be under the SparkPoint director's supervision, Skyline's leadership team recently transitioned the center to the college's Workforce Development office instead. This action was part of a larger initiative at the college to provide all Skyline students with stronger skills and networks for entering the workforce.
- The SPSC director has been working with the state chancellor's office to expand food distribution and financial literacy services at the state's community colleges.

Performance Metrics

SPSC tracks a variety of financial metrics for its measurable clients, including income, debt and savings levels, credit scores and number of bank accounts opened. For its student clients, SPSC also tracks scholarships applied for and obtained and other forms of financial aid received. SPSC generally relies on self-reported information from clients. However, the staff pull credit reports for certain clients every three months and can check college records to confirm data about scholarships and financial aid.

SPSC also tracks course completion and graduation rates for student clients. Center staff report that the fall-to-fall matriculation rate for student participants who attend school during the day is generally in the range of 80% to 90%, compared to 60% collegewide.

Expansion Efforts

SPSC's success has contributed to the creation of SparkPoint Centers at nine different California community colleges.² To support replication, the SPSC director serves on the SparkPoint planning and implementation teams at three of those colleges, hosts frequent tours of the Skyline program and presents at many conferences.

¹ SparkPoint Centers are one-stop centers implementing the CWF approach with support from the United Way Bay Area. SPSC was the first such center established on the campus of a California community college.

² Implementation of the SparkPoint model varies among program sites, at both community colleges and other types of one-stop sites. The following report describes similarities and differences across the SparkPoint Centers:

- Public Profit. (2018). *SparkPoint 2017–18 evaluation findings report, prepared for United Way Bay Area*. Oakland, CA: Author. Retrieved from www.publicprofit.net/resources/files/details?id=1611933