

University of California Extension Degree and Certificate Completion Programs and the UC Reengagement Consortium

The California State Budget Act of 2019 appropriated \$15 million in one-time funding for the University to “develop or expand degree and certificate completion programs at the University of California (UC) extension centers.” There were two requests for proposal (RFPs) periods.

In the first RFP round, UC Merced (UCM) and UC Santa Barbara (UCSB) received funding for degree completion work, UCLA for certificate completions that support underserved communities, and UC San Diego (UCSD) to produce a California market workforce market demand dashboard with skill gaps and workforce needs to support all UC Extension operations.

The second RFP round resulted in additional funds for UCM and UCSD to continue their work, along with approval of UC Davis’s (UCD) and UC Riverside’s (UCR) joint degree completion proposal and the formation of the UC Reengagement Consortium (UCRC). The UCRC consolidated degree completion efforts for UCM, UCSB, UCD and UCR.

FUNDING

- The California State Budget Act of 2019 appropriated \$15 million in one-time funding for the University to “develop or expand degree and certificate completion programs at the University of California (UC) extension centers.”
- Six UC campuses were awarded funds for degree and certificate completion:

UC Merced	\$5,778,498
UC Davis/UC Riverside	\$4,850,000*
UC Santa Barbara	\$967,921
UCLA	\$2,910,590**
UC San Diego	\$450,000***

*UCD and UCR submitted a joint proposal, but the funds distribution is as follows: UCD \$2,221,290, UCR \$2,628,710.

**The UCLA programs is for certificate completion only.

***The UC San Diego funding was allocated for market demand research.

This topic brief will describe these efforts in greater detail, update programmatic progress including degree and certificate completion numbers and demographic information, as well as illuminate impediments to this work and potential solutions.

UC Extension Degree Completion Programs

After the first round of RFPs and funds distribution, UCM and UCSB began phase 1 degree completion efforts, with UCSB’s effort at a slightly slower pace due in large part to COVID-19 pandemic impacts.¹ Phase 2 RFP funding for degree completion work began with the UCD and UCR joint proposal that was approved and included partnerships with UCM and UCSB and the formation of the UCRC. In the sections that follow, these programs are in more detail.

UC Merced Extension Degree Completion Program

UCM’s Degree Completion Program is designed to support students who once attended a University of California campus but never finished their first baccalaureate degree to reconnect with programs, requirements, and the financial assistance needed to finish their degree. The

¹ UCSB originally designed their degree and certificate program for mostly in-person instruction. The profound impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift to emergency online instruction slowed their progress and forced them to adjust their approach, which resulted in implementation delays.

program was initially designed to target UCM students who left in good standing, interested in a major within the School of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts (SSHA) and were away for a minimum of two consecutive regular terms. The program quickly expanded, out of demand, to supporting any UCM or non-UCM stopout, across all disciplines including Natural Sciences, Engineering, Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts, as well as students who stopped out in poor academic standing and/or were academically dismissed.

Through a partnership between UCM's Extension program and the SSHA, the goals are to grow core facilities and offer degree completion pathways for stopout students. The program will significantly expand degree completion opportunities in existing majors and certificate programs, with integrative support of comprehensive programming and specialized academic advising.

The main goals are: (1) enroll stopout students via transfer pathways; and (2) grow existing major degree programs and initiate new Extension certificates for stopouts. To do so, the specific aims are:

- Design and initiate a study of UCM stopout students.
- Promote and expand major degree completion, with certificate offerings as enrichment and post-baccalaureate professionalization.
- Enhance academic support through specialized staffing and dedicated student success programming.
- Support academic capacity growth, with expansion and improvement of major and certificate course offerings.
- Develop facilities by retrofitting dedicated classrooms for synchronous learning opportunities.

This project design increases degree completion with outreach, degree pathways and comprehensive support to encourage and sustain the return of stopout students in the region.

UC Santa Barbara Extension Degree Completion Program

UCSB's initial proposal focused on getting financially distressed transfer-eligible city college graduates on the UCSB matriculation track. But the campus faced policy and practical impediments and decided to participate in UCRC efforts and reach out to near-completer stopouts to assist them with their degree completion. They have recently started working with UCSB's Division of Undergraduate Education to identify the recent stopouts who are eligible for their program.

In addition, UCSB first-year efforts focused on creating the technical infrastructure needed to support a remote presence as well as advance marketing efforts. Subsequently, they are beginning to see good enrollment growth in the GROW² eligible programs, including Accounting, Applied Behavior Analysis, Business Administration, Business Communication & Law, Business Leadership, Cleanroom Training, Child Life, Digital Marketing, Emergency Medical Technician

² In collaboration with UCOP, and supported by funds that are part of those allocated for degree and certificate completion illuminated in this brief, UCSB Professional and Continuing Education (UCSB PaCE) launched GROW, a degree completion and professional development assistance initiative that is exclusively for North County Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo and Kern County residents.

(EMT), Human Resource Management, Hospitality, Introduction to Global Business, Management Training for Public Administration, Paralegal Studies, and Project Management.

Future work will focus on new north Santa Barbara county workforce development programs including in Management Training for Public Administrators (in collaboration with, and advised by, the City of Santa Maria); Hospitality Workshops; Cleanroom Training (in collaboration with Santa Barbara City College and UCSB Engineering and advised by local semiconductor technology companies); and currently working with Allied Health Workforce Shortage Workgroup to develop programs around healthcare industry.

In collaboration with UCSB Career Services, UCSB has been working to set the foundations for a career advising program, including customized job-search, resume polishing, interview help, tools, and free consultation with professional advisors.

UC Davis Extension Degree Completion Program

UCD degree completion work is divided into two phases.

Phase 1 work focuses on UC stopouts not already engaged by the campus. Initial students targeted are UC stopouts in good standing, students who entered UCD between 2008-2018, and those who experienced at least a two-quarter lapse.

Phase 2 efforts focus on adults in their service area with some college, no degree. The target population now includes a general population of adults who might benefit from a UCD education, whether it be a degree or high-quality alternative credential.

Degree completion is at the core of these efforts, particularly in Phase 1. As the project broadens its target population in Phase 2, UC certificate programs may provide an additional pathway by which the University of California can support adults in transforming their lives and advancing their careers.

UC Riverside Degree Completion Program

UCR degree completion efforts provide degree and certificate completion to UCR stopouts, stopouts who wish to transfer from other UC campuses, and California residents with some college and no attainment living in or around Riverside, San Bernardino, Orange, and Los Angeles counties. The program offers three primary pathways for student reengagement: 1) readmission/transfer; 2) pre-readmission eligibility coursework via concurrent enrollment or XR courses; and 3) alternative credentials/career certificates.

The UCR degree completion program provides a combination of “high touch” advising support and academic preparatory coursework to fill curricular gaps or address other academic readiness issues (e.g., grade improvement, refreshers, financial aid counseling support). Advisors build personal connections with the prospective returning students, get to know them, and act as program participants, “advocates,” and “champions” that connect them with resources and people to help them return and complete. Outreach is proactive rather than reactive and every effort is made to provide holistic advising support to address students’ non-academic needs including housing, basic needs, childcare, and mental and physical health. Close partnership with the Academic Resource Center and a designated counselor in the Financial Aid office helps advisors address two of the main concerns that UC stopout students identified as barriers in the UCOP systemwide stopout survey: financial cost and academic preparedness.

At the onset of this program, UCR understood the importance of tying the program to regional labor and market needs and committed to being data driven in their planning and decision making. They have utilized research on UC stopouts from UCSD Extension, as well as the Skillscape Workforce Dashboard (described later in this report) that UCSD Extension created in partnership with UCSD Center for Research and Evaluation.

Thanks in large part to UCR's partnership with Growing Inland Achievement (GIA), a regional K-16 collaborative that works to achieve education and economic equity in the Inland Empire region of Southern California, UCR was able to access a database, provided by CollegeAPP free of charge, of California residents in Riverside and San Bernardino counties who have "some college and no degree" and a strong interest in returning to complete their degrees at a university within the next two years.

In addition to data from GIA, they have also relied on their industry association to provide market research. The University Professional and Continuing Education Association recently completed a market study to identify specific market needs and alignment with their current certificate program offerings. Projected regional market growth areas were identified in the following occupational fields: business, engineering and technology, healthcare and medicine, natural and agricultural sciences, education, and public policy and administration. High quality UC credentials are valued by employers. Recent analysis by Moody's and others support that alternative credentials are the fastest growing educational segment, as adults increasingly recognize the need to continually reskill and upskill to remain employable.³

While this market research provides prioritized target areas for promotion of job-aligned certificate programs to stopout students, the UCR Degree Completion program's primary focus is on reengagement for the purpose of bachelor's degree completion. However, they also anticipate that there may be interest in the certificate pathway primarily from individuals who did not attend UCR but completed some college credits at other institutions; thus, they expect to see higher interest in certificates.

UC Reengagement Consortium

UCM, UCR, UCD, and UCSB comprise the UCRC. Led by the UCRC Leadership Committee, their innovative consortium model extends beyond programmatic and audience expansion to include shared operational services and a multi-level community of practice that supports the success of all four partner campuses in the pursuit of reengagement, re-entry, and completion.

UCRC has established communities of practice at the advising, director, and dean levels and each of these groups meets weekly or monthly to collaborate and share promising practices around degree completion program implementation. Each of their campuses also engages representatives from their campuses' undergraduate education units (Registrars, Financial Aid Officers, Advisors, Housing, etc.) to work collaboratively to address barriers to re-engagement and re-entry.

Given the vast territories the four UC Extensions cover, their combined and collaborative efforts serve most of the state of California, including the most underserved regions and populations of the state. Having adjacent territorial boundaries and similarly large and heterogeneous markets allow them to think beyond the boundaries of each institution to identify viable pockets of need

³ Inside Higher Education, 27 August, 2020, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/08/27/interest-spikes-short-term-online-credentials-will-it-be-sustained>

that might not achieve economies of scale within a single region. Below are UCRC areas of focus.

Reentry/Reengagement Pathways:

Reengagement efforts are focusing on two populations: 1) UC stopouts, and 2) California resident adults with some college, and no degree or certificate attainment.

The UCRC is making a systematic outreach effort to reach UC stopouts at UCM, UCR and UCD from 2005 to the present as a supplement to existing reengagement and retention activities on the campuses serving this population through a combination of "high-touch" advising support and academic preparatory coursework to fill curricular gaps or address other academic readiness issues (e.g., grade improvement, refreshers, financial support). The latter is being accomplished by leveraging the concurrent enrollment mechanism or, when sufficient demand exists, offering dedicated XR/XM courses.

Transfer Pathway:

Similar to reentry, there are systems and structures on UC campuses to support transfer students. For students who are academically ready to transfer, the UCRC is not duplicating this work but rather providing warm hand-offs to existing transfer programs/advisors. Some portions of this population have academic gaps in their preparation that the UC Extensions are well poised to fill. Using XR and XM courses and concurrent enrollment to help students earn transferable credit.

Curricular and Operational Supports for Partnering Campuses, including UCM and UCSB:

A key aspect of this collaboration is the commitment of all four campuses to share strategies, practices, curricula, and even operational staff to support the success of each campus. This approach will serve not just the current UCR/UCD programs but will also augment the capacities at UCM and UCSB to promote success of the entire UC Extension Degree Completion Pilot.

Operational Sharing:

The UCD, UCM, UCR and UCSB partner campuses are among the smaller UC Extensions. Thus, the commitment to sharing personnel and existing technologies allows the Consortium to achieve maximum economies of scale and operational efficiencies and is crucial to sustainability of this program long-term. UCRC is building on this successful and flexible model allowing individual Extensions to leverage strengths across the system, save resources, and scale quickly. Specifically, UCR and UCD are sharing instructional design and IT support for systems integration and UCR and UCM are sharing a CRM Manager and Assistant Director. Campus Advising Liaison. They are also aggregating their data and providing it to UCD who then add the data to Tableau for the purposes of UCRC collective reporting.

Advising is also being shared across campuses. The academic advising pools, although split and housed at both UCR and UCD act as agents of the overall UCRC mission; connecting students with the program and supports (tutoring, etc.) at the partner campus that fits their needs. This helps to facilitate a smooth transition of students between campuses and provides continuity of care and service for the students as they proceed through the funnel from identification to outreach and from intake and advising.

UCRC Degrees Conferred and Demographics

As of Spring 2024, 242 students have already received a degree with another 110 filed for graduation from three UCRC campuses (UCD, UCM, and UCR; see Table 1). UCSB has awarded certificates but maintains a relationship with UCRC for degree completion. Additionally, over 400 students are enrolled and over 1,100 students have received active advising, with enrollment expected to grow as UCRC scales up its outreach and programs.

Table 1. Total degree completion rates to date (spring 2024)

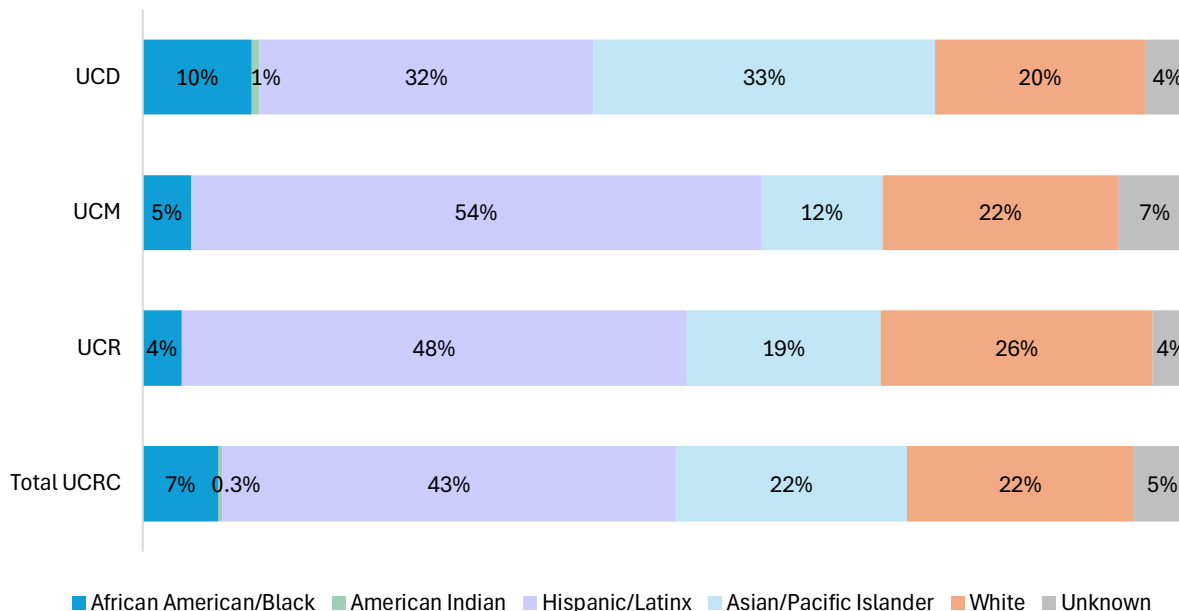
Campus	Total Enrollment	Filed for Graduation	Degrees Conferred	Students actively advised
UC Davis	56	13	120	349
UC Merced	306	95	95	389
UC Riverside	63	2	27	384
Total	424	110	242	1,122

A profile of undergraduate students over a 15-year period, from 2002-2016, showed around 10 percent of undergraduate students started but did not complete a degree at UC or any other university.⁴ Compared to undergraduate degree recipients, students who do not complete their degrees are more likely to come from underrepresented race/ethnicity groups. Specifically, there were higher proportions of African American/Black (6 percent compared to 3 percent) and Hispanic/Latino(a) (27 percent compared to 18 percent) students among those who did not complete a bachelor's degree.

However, students who return to UC and complete a degree through UCRC are also more likely to come from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups (see Figure 1 below). That is, compared to both undergraduate degree recipients and students who stopped out, there were higher proportions of African American/Black (7 percent) and Hispanic/Latino(a) (43 percent) students who completed a degree between the 2020-21 and 2023-24 academic years. The UCRC degree completion data seems to provide some evidence that groups of students who may be more likely to stopout (e.g., students from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups) are responding to targeted efforts to reengage with the university.

⁴ Profile of undergraduate stopouts, UC Information Center: <https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/about-us/information-center/ug-stopouts>

Figure 1. Degrees conferred by race/ethnicity (2020-21 – 2023-24)



Challenges and Opportunities to Improve the Degree and Certificate Completion Process

UCRC campuses identified existing challenges and opportunities to increase degree and certificate attainment.

Challenge: The “Senior Residency Requirement”

Challenges to the degree completion process vary somewhat by campus but all campuses with degree completion programs noted the “senior residency requirement” as a significant impediment (Senate Regulation 630.A. below).

SR 630.A.

Except as otherwise provided in this section and SR 614⁵, 35 (or 24 semester) of the final 45 (or 30 semester) units completed by each candidate for the bachelor's degree must be earned in residence in the college or school of the University of California in which the degree is to be taken. (Am 9 Mar 83; Am 23 May 01)

Many near completers spent much of their undergraduate career on campus. However, since stopping out, they moved home, are working full time, and each have their own unique family

⁵ Senate Regulation 614.: With the approval of the dean of the candidate's college or school, a candidate for the Bachelor's degree who was in active service in the armed forces of the United States in the year preceding the award of the degree may be recommended for the degree after only one term of University residence in which the candidate completes at least 16 units or passes a comprehensive examination in his/her major or field of concentration.

circumstances that would make it difficult to return to campus. Meanwhile, online course offerings remain limited.

As noted by UCD, online courses taken via Open Campus, do not receive residence units. “It is inequitable that matriculated Davis students are receiving residence units for these courses, while our Open Campus stopouts do not.”

Potential Solutions:

- Providing a blanket (or college/school level) waiver of residency requirement for students funneling through Degree Completion programs such as the exception implemented below by UCD (approved by the UCD Senate):

Students completing their degree program through the UCD Stopout Project are exempt from the senior residence requirement as described in Senate Regulation 630.A. Dean’s Offices may key this exemption without further approval of the Academic Senate. This authorization is in effect through graduation term summer 2024.

- Creating policy that includes Extension coursework in residence.
- Include coursework taken at any UC campus as “in residence.”

Challenge: Lack of Access or Applicability to Online Courses

The fact that online courses do not meet the residency requirements, as outlined above, is particularly problematic given that the stopout student population has expressed an overwhelming need for online coursework.⁶ Many stopout students are caregivers, working professionals, or do not live geographically close to their former campus. Further, for students with high unit counts, transferring to another campus is not a viable option to complete their degrees.

According to UCR and in addition to the challenges in meeting the residency requirement, many students cannot access appropriate solutions to complete their degree at UCR due to the lack of online course offerings and online programs.

Also, because GPA does not transfer, online (XB, XD, XM, XR etc.) courses are also not a solution for students who left in poor standing and want to regain eligibility to readmit.

UCR has no oversight on the modality for concurrent enrollment courses and seats in concurrent enrollment are limited. UC Online is only a viable option for matriculated students. The lack of articulation across campuses also requires people and time-intensive advocacy to create viable online solutions for degree completion program students.

Potential Solutions:

- Providing a functional mechanism for cross-campus articulation of breadth courses to help students complete.
- Working with Extension to expand the online course portfolio.
- Identify a list of online course offerings across all campuses.

⁶ In outreach to over 2,300 UC stopouts that reported on the UCSD degree completion stopout survey in Fall 2021, UCM was able to engage over 80 students. Of those 80 students, 96% indicated that online course options were going to be crucial for them to complete their degrees.

- Offering upper division coursework online.
- Waiving residency requirement for online coursework completed elsewhere.
- Utilizing funds earmarked for professional development to train and/or provide financial incentives for faculty to build and offer online courses that will help students finish their degrees.

Challenge: Lack of Financial Aid

Courses taken at Extensions are not eligible for Federal Financial Aid. Students requiring concurrent enrollment coursework to qualify for readmission and students needing online courses must carry the financial burden of the coursework. Thus, the financial burden for stopouts to return and complete their coursework at a UC Extension is a significant impediment.

Potential Solution:

- Modeling UC Extensions to be like CA State Universities (CSUs) so that returning students are eligible for financial aid.

Challenge: Bottleneck Courses

Concurrent enrollment seats are not guaranteed and sometimes students are unable to gain access to their needed course.

Potential Solutions:

- Program “X” sections (XB, XD, XM, XR etc.) in highly needed breadth course areas specifically for Degree Completion program students.
- Negotiate with departments to secure concurrent enrollment seats in breadth course bottleneck areas.
- More effective mechanisms for cross-campus articulation or UC Online options in these areas.

Certificate Completion Program and Workforce Market Demand Research

In addition to the degree completion work, one-time state funds were used to increase certificate completions targeting underserved communities, along with the development of a California market demand workforce dashboard. Both efforts are described below.

UCLA Extension Certificate Completion Program

UCLAxCareerBridge is the Los Angeles Extension program providing adults from diverse under resourced communities with access to professional training that prepares them for in-demand careers. The goal is to extend access to education by removing financial barriers, through partnerships and the grant funding provided by the State of California. Each training program covers a specialized field and provides the educational background needed to attain gainful employment including health benefits, and career pathways for advancement. CareerBridge addresses three areas of high need and growth in the workforce, aligning with the following certificates:

The Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counseling Certificate (ADAC) provides training to meet a critical need in treating substance use disorders (SUD). Approximately 2.9 million Californians (9%) age 12 and older have a substance use disorder (reported 2018-2019). Six percent reported symptoms that met the criteria for abuse of or dependence on alcohol, and about 4% reported meeting criteria for abuse of or dependence on illicit drugs⁷ yet only 10% of those affected receive treatment. California is undertaking a major effort to expand SUD services, and well educated and certified counselors are in demand especially since multiple reports indicate drug overdoses have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁸ Students completing the ADAC serve an in-demand role in SUD treatment and gain employment in substance use disorder treatment facilities, residential treatment centers, prisons, juvenile detention centers and government agencies.

Graduates of the Early Childhood Education skill - Associate Teacher Certificate (ECE) are in high demand because of growth in the field and the Governor's budget proposal goals, which recognize the essential need of quality early care for young children's outcomes and for working adults. In 2020, it was projected that 200,000 new early learning teachers would be required in the state.⁹ The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this issue, with California permanently losing 10% of the ECE teaching force.¹⁰ This certificate provides the foundational knowledge needed to become an Associate Teacher in a preschool or childcare setting, for children aged from birth to five years. It meets the 12 ECE/CD units needed for the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing Associate Teacher permit. Students funded by the grant are required to take a prerequisite course, five core courses, and a practicum. Courses are also being offered in Spanish for Spanish speaking students.

⁷ California Health Care Almanac, January 2022 (page 5)

⁸ *A qualitative assessment of circumstances surrounding drug overdose deaths during early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. SUDORS Data Brief, Number 2, August 2022*

⁹ Early Edge CA EECA Workforce Policy Summary 2020, <https://earlyedgecalifornia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/EECA-Workforce-Policy-Paper.pdf>

¹⁰ Cal Matters, <https://calmatters.org/economy/2021/10/california-child-care-worker-shortage/>

The Data Science Certificate offers students technical skills that are marketable and in high demand so they can start careers in data science. This certificate provides hands-on experience in data management, programming, statistics, and machine learning to extract, analyze and communicate findings. Students learn to leverage the power of big data to gain insights and improve decision making related to real-world problems.

Table 2 provides data on enrollment to date, along with certificates completed and counts for those still enrolled.

Table 2. UCLA total certificate completion rates to date (fall 2024)

Certificate	Total Enrollment	Certificates Completed	Completion Rate	Still Enrolled
Early Childhood Education (ECE)	118	36	30.5%	28
Data Science	127	28	22.0%	19
Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counseling (ADAC)	56	10	17.9%	11
Total	301	74	24.6%	58

UC San Diego Extension Center for Research and Evaluation (CR+E) Degree Completion Analysis and Workforce Market Demand

The one-time grant funding enabled CR+E to conduct a statewide survey of thousands of Californians who have started but not finished four-year degrees and create a novel workforce dashboard with a wealth of information on labor market supply and demand for all of the metropolitan statistical areas (MSA) in the state of California. The Skillscape Workforce Dashboard provides valuable insights into the regional labor markets for all of the UC campus locations and is useful for identifying areas for program development and ensuring appropriate alignment between current programs and workforce needs.

UCSD Extension Center for Research and Evaluation submitted a second proposal for additional funding to update the workforce dashboard with current labor market data. In addition to updating the dashboard data, improvements from user feedback can be integrated to make the tool more valuable and user friendly. The proposal was approved and has allowed them to continue their work and expand the scope to provide data applicable to traditional campus programs and UC alumni.

Figure 2. UC Workforce Dashboard

