

San Diego State University

Program in Educational Leadership Dissertation Defense Announcement

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Title of Dissertation: Empowering Tomorrow's Workforce: A Case Study of a Community College Workforce Development Program for Sustainable Engagement in the Homelessness Services Sector

Date of Defense: Wednesday, February 19, 2025

Time of Defense: 2:00 p.m.

Location of Defense: [Zoom](https://SDSU.zoom.us/j/85483257321), <https://SDSU.zoom.us/j/85483257321>

Abstract

The Homelessness Education and Real-world Training (HEART) Program is a unique workforce development program designed to address the critical need for a prepared and skilled workforce in the homelessness services sector. The program was created by a housing authority in partnership with an urban community college. The HEART program consists of four components (1) a college course on homelessness, (2) career coaching and professional job development, (3) academic counseling, and (4) strategic job pathways and partnerships with homelessness service providers. A qualitative case study was conducted to evaluate each component in its relation to its participants' preparedness for entering the homelessness service

Sector.

Research on engaging and preparing students to enter the homelessness services sector is limited, with most studies focusing on graduate level students. There is currently no literature addressing the preparation and training of community college students for this sector. This study collected data from 20 HEART participants through semi-structured interviews. Using Career Capital theory as a framework, this study examined how participation in the HEART program equipped community college students with the skills, knowledge, and networks needed to succeed in the homelessness services sector.

The study yielded four themes, which included (1) Building Foundational Knowledge for Homelessness Workforce Engagement; (2) Individualized Support for Professional and Career Development; (3) Academic Counseling for Student Empowerment and Success, and (4) Leveraging Relationships and Connections for Career and Professional Growth. The findings provide guidance for higher education administrators, housing authority officials, and homeless service providers looking to address worker shortages in homelessness services.