

# Joint Special Populations Advisory Committee's Nontraditional Students and Occupations \* E-Seminar \* **Text and Links**



Welcome to the California Perkins Joint Special Populations Advisory Committee's (JSPAC) E-Seminar on Nontraditional Students and Occupations.

Within the Federal Carl D. Perkins act of 2006, which governs Career Technical Education or CTE, there are 6 subgroups of students who are considered "special populations" meaning that they face unique and at times, seemingly insurmountable barriers to success in education or employment.

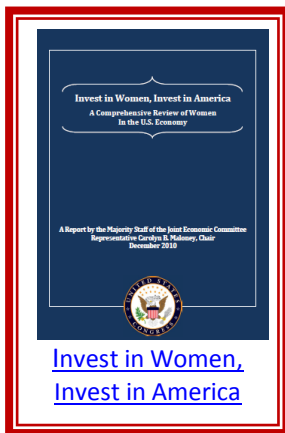
The Federal Carl D. Perkins Act of 2006, governs Career Technical Education or CTE. There are 6 subgroups of students who are considered "special populations." Special Populations students face unique and at times, seemingly insurmountable barriers to success in education or employment.

To learn more about the other subgroups, view [JSPAC's Special Populations 101 E-seminar](#).



One of the Special Populations subgroups includes students who are preparing for a career that is **Nontraditional by gender**. A Nontraditional occupation is any occupation in which one gender comprises less than 25% of the total workforce in that occupation. Thus, a woman who is preparing to enter into the trades or a man who is preparing to enter into early childhood education are both considered Nontraditional.

## Why do we care about Nontraditional students and employees?



First, all workers, female and male, have a right to choose among a full range of occupations, not just those dictated by tradition or their own current knowledge of occupations. **Employers are looking for a diverse workforce as all people bring different attributes to the workforce based in part upon their social experiences, gender, ethnicity, and physical abilities.** A diverse workforce is a strong workforce! Additionally, for women, many of the highest paying occupations are Nontraditional.

Women in Nontraditional careers typically earn 20%-30% more than women in traditional occupations, and, over a lifetime, may earn 150% more. This means that not only can they care for their families more effectively, but they can retire with greater security.

Occupations that are Nontraditional may suit a particular woman better because often the workplace is outside, the jobs are more physical, the tasks are more diverse or hands-on, and the results can be more tangible, relevant, or simply meaningful to her.

Now take a minute to guess at the answers to the following questions:

1. In 2011, **engineering technicians** and in 2011 earned a median income of **\$63,500** in CA and only 16.3% were women.
2. In 2011, only **5.5%** of **mechanical engineers** were women? And in 2011 earned a median income of CA of **\$97,300/year**.
3. **Computer hardware engineers** were expected to have **23.6%** employment change between 2011 and 2020. And women represented **13.2%** of them, and their annual median salary in CA in 2011 was **\$111,700**.
4. In 2011, Women were **12%** of **Police and Sheriff Patrol officers** and they earned a median income of **\$79,000** in CA.
5. In 2011, **85.4%** of **office clerks** were women, and they earned a median income of **\$31,000** in CA.

Does any of this surprise you? Do you think your students understand this? Can you see using this in classes, counseling sessions, and recruitment sessions? Do you think that students know that Engineering Technicians and Office Clerks have similar levels training, I.E. less than a four year degree, and yet a vastly disparate salary<sup>1</sup>. Do you know students who have chosen their career based upon having a Tuesday/Thursday class schedule? Or their mother/father was in the career - or worse their girl-friend or boy-friend - was in the program?

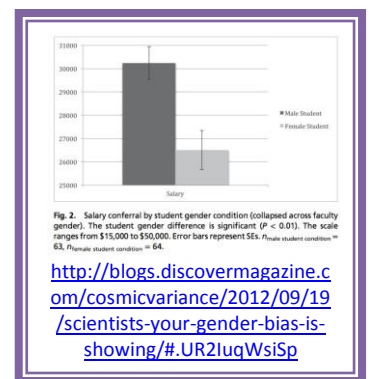
### Quite a stark difference, isn't it?

For men, many jobs that are considered Nontraditional pay less. However, a career that is in a field that he loves can bring satisfaction and personal fulfillment beyond measure. Additionally, Nontraditional careers for men can be a means of advancing to higher wage jobs such as business owners, school administrators, and/or managers. Also, in a Nontraditional occupation, men, by and large, get paid more than women!

For instance, a woman earns an average of \$1034 per week as a Registered Nurse. How much do you think a man earns as a Registered Nurse? He earns \$1081 per week - That's \$2,444 a year more for a woman in the same profession!

Not all Nontraditional jobs for men pay poorly. Only 3.4% of dental hygienists were men but they earn \$986 weekly, over \$51,000 a year!

From the perspective of the employers and the overall economy, a diverse workforce is not just the right thing to do, it is often a requirement for receiving federal grants or contracts. It also can result in better products as it can make design and production teams more cohesive and innovative, and it often improves customer satisfaction. Ensuring a diverse workforce comes from effort and a conscious decision to recruit and retain women and men into Nontraditional occupational training programs.



<sup>1</sup>[http://www.careerinfonet.org/Occupations/select\\_occupation.aspx?next=occ\\_rep&level=&optstatus=11111111&id=1&nodeid=2&soccode=&stfips=&jobfam=](http://www.careerinfonet.org/Occupations/select_occupation.aspx?next=occ_rep&level=&optstatus=11111111&id=1&nodeid=2&soccode=&stfips=&jobfam=)

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## How do we do that? What efforts are the most effective?

Developing an environment that is welcoming, supportive, and encouraging to students of both genders as well as all ethnicities and abilities is crucial. The absence of this environment is referred to as a “chilly climate”.

Want to know how to warm up the chilly climate in the workplace or in the classroom?

Visit: [www.bernicesandler.com](http://www.bernicesandler.com)



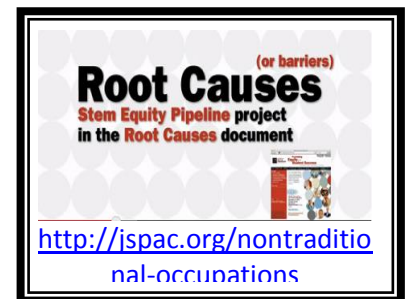
Utilize a process, such as the Program Improvement Process for Equity (Pipe) developed by Nape ([www.napequity.org](http://www.napequity.org)) to get the whole “team” on board. This includes administrators, counselors, faculty & teachers, lab assistants, classroom aids, and all other staff who make a school function well. All educational team members play a crucial role in enabling Nontraditional students to enter into and complete a program. It is important the campus, classrooms, and team members are welcoming to both genders.

Remember that one-shot fixes are generally not effective. Therefore, make a plan in which each step builds upon the one before. Implement it over several months to keep the flow steady and the conversation going. Use empirical data to identify gaps in student performance. Once an identified solution is applied, use data to measure the successes of your selected solutions and make adjustments as necessary!

Here are a few ideas. More can be found at the many websites listed on the JSPAC website at [www.jspac.org](http://www.jspac.org).

- 1 Begin with examining your Perkins Core Indicators and other data to identify gaps in success rates for students and programs. Look at longitudinal data - ideally three years or more. Look for trends in participation, persistence, and completion rates of all students, as well as those that are Nontraditional by gender. This is Step #1 in a 5-Step process for Program Improvement. Once gaps are identified, work with students, faculty, staff, CTE Advisory Committee members and other support staff to identify the most probable causes for the gaps.

The document, *Nontraditional Career Preparation: Root Causes and Strategies* is available on the JSPAC website. This research-based document is very useful in identifying probable root causes for identified gaps. Identifying root causes will help you target your improvement strategies to your unique situation.



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- 2 From there, host professional development opportunities that raise the awareness level of all school or college educators about the gaps identified, as well as about the benefits of Nontraditional occupations.

Professional development opportunities can include this E-Seminar and others found at [JSPAC's](http://jspac.org) website, a series of in-person sessions or workshops; webinars; email updates; faculty, counselor, or area meeting presentations; or printed materials. Ideally a combination of many of the above ideas will be the most effective. Many suggestions for relevant topics can be found on the JSPAC website.



The website contains information on topics such as: Startling Statements about Employment Data, ways to analyze curriculum and teaching, how to improve a “chilly climate” in the classroom or on campus, and information about “internal barriers” such as affirmation theory, stereotype threat, implicit messages, and self-efficacy.

- 3 Have ethnically- and ability- diverse Nontraditional employees make short presentations at faculty and staff meetings on the reasons they entered a Nontraditional occupation as well as the benefits and hurdles they faced.

- 4 Work with counselors to ensure that they are aware of Nontraditional occupations. Have teachers and counselors participate in the Project Implicit bias awareness tests to root out and understand hidden bias. Present the idea that, while we all have hidden biases, it is our job to be aware of them and do our best to put them aside when working with students.



Reaffirm the intent and requirement of the [CA education code 66271.7d](#), which states: *Any school personnel acting in a career counseling or course selection capacity to any pupil shall affirmatively explore with the pupil the possibility of careers, or courses leading to careers, that are Nontraditional for that pupil's sex.*

Ensure that counselors know the salary differential AND self-sufficiency standard for their area and different families. Ensure that counselors know the salary differential AND self-sufficiency standard for their area and different families. Visit the Insight Center for Community Economic Development website to learn the Self Sufficiency standard for 156 family configurations in all 58 CA counties!



Schedule [Nontraditional role models](#) to speak at counselor meetings to raise the awareness of the career satisfaction of Nontraditional employees, increased salaries, and job availability. Provide

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Nontraditional role models and mentors that “look like” the students as much as possible. Make sure that they are of similar age, background, ethnicity, and abilities. When hosting a career fair, ensure that the staff at the booths are Nontraditional and that the booths allow for as much hands on activity as possible.

To assist in recruiting more Nontraditional students, ensure that images on marketing materials, in class schedules, classrooms, dining areas, counseling areas, and other common student access areas are diverse in terms of gender, ethnicity, and ability. When choosing images, pay close attention to the Nontraditional students. Are they in an active role? Ensure that the general school and college materials are as diverse as the CTE department materials so that equity and diversity are not just CTE goals! Recruit Nontraditional students in groups. This forms a cohort of students within the training programs which can be useful for support. Hire faculty, assistants, and other support staff members that reflect the students you want in your classrooms - ones that mirror the community at large - diverse in all ways!



A key factor in encouraging students to pursue Nontraditional careers can be the wages. Students need to know how much money they will need to live, without public or private assistance, in **their** geographic area with **their** family composition. In order to determine this, visit the Insight website with your students to determine a self-sufficiency wage. A [self-sufficiency wage](#) is one in which a person earns a wage that is sufficient for them to live *in their community, with their family composition, with no assistance* from private or public entities.



To retain Nontraditional students, develop and provide resources and services to allow students to overcome the barriers they face. Support groups can be useful as frequently the barriers are internal. These include isolation and lack of self-efficacy and can be overcome with peer support. If there are financial difficulties, refer students to community or campus resources of support.

Teach students about what we classify as internal barriers - ones that we control within ourselves (Visit the JSPAC website for an E-Seminar on Internal Barriers). These include self-efficacy, attribution theory, incremental learning, self-advocacy, critical thinking and stereotype threat. It’s NOT that stereotypes DON’T exist externally, but we can control the impact that they have upon us.

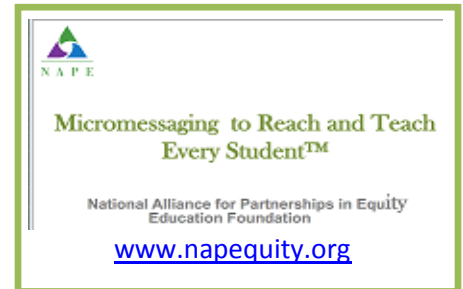
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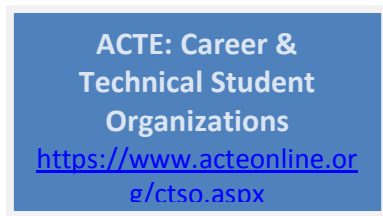
- 5 Be mindful, in the classroom and other areas in which you interact with students, that your *own* biases and stereotypes don't unconsciously steer students into careers that are traditional by gender.

Visit the Harvard University's Implicit Project website to become more aware of your possible biases regarding gender and career, skin color, or gender and science ability, for example.

Be aware of the micro-messages you send to students. Micro-messages can be helpful, such as a nod or wink to encourage a student. These are called micro-affirmations. They can also be harmful. Not making eye contact or continuing with work while a student talks during an office visit can send a negative message. These are called micro-inequities. Sometimes we ignore a female student's success while rewarding a male student's same accomplishments. This can send a female student the message that she is not valued or does not belong in the program or school. Most often these behaviors are unconscious and unintended. However, what you **intend to say** or communicate is **less important** than the **impact your interaction** has on the student!



- 6 Ensure that, in classes while doing group work, the Nontraditional students are in groups with traditional students and not by themselves. Also, require that **all** students perform **all** tasks to ward off the tendency of women being made the note takers, or men doing the heavy lifting. All students must be able to perform all tasks if they are to be successful in the workforce!



Promote and facilitate Career Technical Student Organizations or CTSOs. CTSOs allow students to achieve high academic and occupational standards due to the illustrated correlation between the materials being taught and the student's career goals. Additionally, CTSOs allow a student to develop leadership skills that will benefit them throughout their working career and in life in general! In providing leadership to a CTSO, make sure you teach the students about all the issues discussed earlier - self advocacy and efficacy, stereotype threat, and micro-messages, for example.

- Develop meaningful business partnerships and career networking opportunities in your CTE occupational arena. Encourage these partners to create internships that assist students in recognizing the correlation between school-based learning and the real world of work, motivating them to become better students and productive citizens, developing school and community leadership skills, and enhancing their self-esteem and self-confidence. Read, and encourage your business partners to read, [Standing on the Shoulders of Giants: An American Agenda for Educational Reform](#).

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There are many more ways to increase the participation and success rates of both women and men in Nontraditional careers and career preparation programs.

It is up to us to analyze our own bias, develop awareness of the benefits of Nontraditional occupations, and to do all we can to promote programs that lead to high-wage, high-demand careers. JSPAC has many resources on their website. Click on the [Nontraditional Occupations](#) button on the left hand side menu!

Ok, that's is a lot to digest! But, before you tune out - take a minute to visit and bookmark the rest of the JSPAC website. While you are here, sign up for the [News You Can Use](#) newsletter, signup to attend the annual [JSPAC conference](#) or Host a [JSPAC regional workshop](#)!

Next time you are thinking about program improvement, or have a student who is not doing as well as you know they could, visit the JSPAC website and look through some resources for inspiration and guidance!

