

POSTSECONDARY CTE INTERESTS

OCTOBER 2014



ACTE has been working diligently on your behalf throughout the last year. This document contains highlights of actions the Association has taken to advocate for postsecondary CTE institutions, programs and students in 2014. These activities would not be possible without your ACTE membership! Your membership dues have a direct impact on our ability to advocate for federal support of CTE and engage in broader activities to enhance this work.

Throughout the year, you can stay up-to-date on how ACTE is representing your interests by visiting the new CTE Policy Watch blog. The blog now features enhanced tools for accessing and interacting with information, including the ability to quickly identify posts relevant to postsecondary issues through specific categories and tags.

Funding

The year started with a large focus on federal funding as Congress worked to wrap up the FY 2014 appropriations bills following the government shutdown at the end of 2013. In January, Congress passed the final FY 2014 omnibus appropriations bill that included a \$53 million increase for Perkins! The funding boost for Perkins restored over 90 percent of the sequester cut for the Perkins Basic State Grant program, increasing funding levels in many states and for many postsecondary institutions.

After this funding victory, focus shifted to FY 2015 appropriations as we worked to restore the remaining sequestration cut. Ac-

tivities included Hill visits, legislative alerts, “Dear Colleague” letters, coalition activities, op-eds and media placements. These efforts proved successful when the Senate’s Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill did include another small increase for Perkins, bringing the allocation back to its pre-sequestration level. Action on the final funding bill has been delayed however, and likely won’t be complete until at least December.

Workforce Investment Act

Another key victory this year was the final passage of the Workforce Investment Act reauthorization, termed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), in July. This reauthorization came after over 10 years of debate, and included many provisions sought after by our community. Some of positive CTE-related provisions that were incorporated into WIOA include a strong emphasis on career pathways and training programs leading to recognized credentials, as well as the continued representation of education providers on the local Workforce Investment Boards. Additionally, the law allows for direct contracting between postsecondary education providers and workforce boards for in-demand training programs, and eliminates the current “sequence of services” requirement to speed up access to training services for job seekers.

One of the biggest areas of concern throughout the reauthorization was a requirement for mandatory contributions from WIA partner programs, which include



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postsecondary CTE programs, in order to fund the cost of one-stop infrastructure. Through our advocacy work, we were able to ensure a number of protections around this requirement, including maintaining the local MOU process as the primary infrastructure funding mechanism, involving the state CTE director in decisions about allocating Perkins resources to one-stops, and ensuring that CTE programs are first able to meet their statutory obligations under Perkins before any funds can be reallocated.

Since the passage of WIOA, ACTE staff have been collecting information and developing resources to share with the CTE field. Key priorities will be ensuring CTE stakeholders are included in the planning process under the new law, and that the infrastructure funding mechanism is implemented appropriately.

Higher Education Policy

ACTE worked throughout the year to advance our Higher Education Act (HEA) priorities, with a focus on ensuring adequate access to financial aid programs for students in short-term postsecondary programs and evaluating data collection requirements to reduce burdens on institutions, align with other federal programs and ensure program integrity. Our work has resulted in the introduction of several bills that will help to inform HEA reauthorization, including Sen. Landrieu's Jumpstart Our Businesses by Supporting Students (JOBS) Act (S. 2033), and Sen. Baldwin's CTE Opportunity Act (S. 2795), both of which would increase financial aid access for students in short-term postsecondary programs.

In June, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee released a discussion draft for reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. While a number of our priorities were included in the draft, ACTE submitted comments to the committee to urge better inclusion of community colleges and less-than-2-year postsecondary institutions in the higher education system.

We have also worked to ensure the inclusion of area CTE centers and other subbaccalaureate institutions in other grant opportunities and student aid programs, including those offered through HEA and through

other agencies, such as Department of Labor programs and veterans' education benefit programs. Finally, we helped to develop and support a bill that would create an additional use of the Teacher Quality Partnership grants program under the Higher Education Act by incentivizing partnerships between school districts and postsecondary institutions to prepare mid-career professionals, veterans and current educators to be effective CTE teachers. The Creating Quality Technical Educators Act, S. 2867, was introduced by Senate CTE Caucus co-chairs Sens. Tim Kaine (D-VA), Rob Portman (R-OH) and Tammy Baldwin (D-WI).

Perkins Reauthorization

ACTE continued to work this year to add detail to our Perkins recommendations, and to educate Members of Congress and other national organizations about the Perkins law and our suggestions for strengthening it through reauthorization. Our key priorities remain focusing on CTE program quality, streamlining administrative requirements and maintaining the integrity of the formula grant. Programs of study and other mechanisms to strengthen secondary-postsecondary linkages have been a major part of the program-quality focus, forming the foundation of our recommendations. We continue to reinforce relationships, particularly with the business community, which will position us well for the reauthorization process in Congress.

Career Pathways

Career pathways—education and workforce development systems focused on moving students through education to careers—are getting more attention than ever before at the federal level, with many departments and agencies discussing strategies to support career pathways development, primarily to address workforce needs. ACTE has been involved in a number of these discussions and activities, including:

- a National Dialogue on Career Pathways hosted by the Departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services
- a forum and related work titled “Strengthening Skills Training and

Career Pathways across the Transportation Industry”

- a project that includes development of the Career Pathways Exchange, a free information service that will consolidate and distribute career pathways-related resources, events and information from federal and state agencies and partner organizations

Throughout this work, we have been promoting the role of CTE in robust career pathways systems.

Resources, Research and Data

ACTE has created a variety of materials in 2014 that communicate how CTE on the postsecondary and adult level facilitates student success and a skilled workforce. We expanded our Sector Sheet series of short publications that describe CTE's role in growing the qualified workforce for vital industry sectors. In addition, we produced a document on state policy trends, including a state-by-state review of CTE-related policies that were enacted in 2013. We also contributed to two articles for Techniques magazine on topics relevant to postsecondary and adult CTE, such as incorporating industry certifications into curriculum and using data for community college programmatic decision-making.

We also continued participating in two data initiatives, the Workforce Data Quality Campaign (WDQC) and the Certification Data Exchange Project. The WDQC encourages a data system that includes the diversity of students and workers and the range of education and labor market outcomes that comprise our nation's human capital strategy, including elements such as industry-recognized credentials and non-traditional students. As a WDQC partner, we helped to develop recommendations to encourage consistent definitions of credentials, state data sharing and the use of administrative data. The Certification Data Exchange Project continued its pilot project on sharing certification data from industry bodies with state education and workforce systems. In the fall, the project learned it had received technical assistance from the Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education to facilitate this work.