

# UPDATE

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**Office of Community College Research and Leadership**  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

347 College of Education • 1310 South Sixth Street • Champaign, IL 61820

Phone: 217-333-0807 • Fax: 217-244-5632

E-Mail: [d-bragg1@uiuc.edu](mailto:d-bragg1@uiuc.edu) • <http://hre.ed.uiuc.edu/occr1>

**TO OUR READERS**

This issue of *Update* focuses on the recent enactment of the 1998 Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act (Perkins III). As we face the 21st Century, educators are entering an era of increasing accountability, fiscal responsibility and student outcomes assessment. In accordance with the emphasis in this volume of *Update*, Gary Hoachlander and Steven Klein's article entitled, "Answering to Perkins" synthesizes the new accountability requirements under Perkins III. Thanks to the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) for allowing us to reprint this insightful article. Eboni Zamani presents the views of community college experts regarding the implications of Perkins III for two-year institutions of higher learning. Professor K. Peter Kuchinke provides information regarding Tech Prep evaluation systems. Recognizing the importance of other federal legislation, especially the new Workforce Investment Act, this issue concludes with a book review by Maxine Russman discussing recent research on emerging patterns in workforce development.

See OCCRL's website at <http://hre.ed.uiuc.edu/occril> for previous issues and other resources.

OCCRL was established in 1989 at the UIUC. *Our mission is to provide research, leadership, and service to community college leaders and assist in improving the quality of vocational-technical education in the Illinois community college system.* The Office is supported by the Illinois State Board of Education, Business, Community and Family Partnerships Center, with funding from the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990.

**STAFF**

**Debra D. Bragg, Ph.D.**, *Update* Editor and Director, OCCRL and Associate Professor, UIUC

**Eboni M. Zamani**, Guest Editor, Graduate Research Assistant

**William Reger IV, Ph.D.**, *Update* Managing Editor and Postdoctoral Research Associate, UIUC

**Linda Iliff**, *Update* Production Manager and Administrative Assistant, UIUC

# Answering to Perkins

by Gary Hoachlander and Steven Klein, MPR Associates, Inc.

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Accountability is the hallmark of the 1998 Carl Perkins Vocational-Technical Education Act. Probably no other aspect of the new legislation has more long-term significance for this field of education or presents a greater challenge for successful implementation. In return for granting states greater flexibility in administering and allocating federal funds, Congress has said forcefully that it expects to see results. Career and technical education must demonstrate its contribution to student achievement, program completion, placement in postsecondary education and the workforce and improved gender equity in program offerings. Here's a look at the new rules. New accountability requirements comprise three features:

1. States must develop systems that monitor performance using four core indicators—student attainment of challenging state-established academic and technical skill proficiencies; student attainment of a high school diploma, equivalent or postsecondary degree or credential; postsecondary education or advanced training placement, retention and completion or placement in the military or employment; technical program participation and completion leading to nontraditional employment.
2. States must establish and are accountable for the indicators and their performance levels (which must be negotiated with the Education Department). If states fail to reach their performance levels, they will undergo state and local program improvement plans, and federal funding may be withheld.
3. States will report annual performance to the Education Department, which in turn will report to Congress and the public. The law stipulates that the national report summarize performance results state by state.

## Three must-do's

Any problems surrounding the implementation of Perkins accountability requirements may incorrectly paint educators as resistant or unresponsive in the eyes of policy-makers. The only way to avoid that (and a potential loss of program support) is to cover these three bases:

**Define workable indicators and performance levels**—The core indicators specified by Perkins must be translated into operational measures that clearly tell local providers of career and technical education what information to produce.

With respect to achievement, precisely what are the academic and technical proficiencies students should master? While many states have developed content standards for academic achievement in grades K-12, most do not have similar standards for technical achievement. Additionally, even where academic standards have been established, there are not yet assessment tools for measuring students' mastery of them.

Furthermore, while other forms of standardized achievement tests are commonplace, in many states there is no testing after grade 10. But the majority of career and technical education occurs in grades 11 and 12. Tenth-grade academic assessment can serve as a baseline, but there is no subsequent testing that would

help determine technical education's contribution to academic achievement.

At the postsecondary level there's no standardized achievement testing. Furthermore, in most states, neither secondary nor postsecondary systems have valid statewide standardized assessments of technical proficiencies.

In the short run, therefore, many states will have to develop proxies for direct measurement of student achievement. Some possible candidates include grades and certificates of program completion (particularly for programs that use some form of competency-based instruction), but the validity of these proxies will require careful consideration.

States and localities should not have any difficulty producing counts of high school graduates and recipients of postsecondary degrees and certificates. The challenge in making the completion indicator operational is defining a valid underlying population on which to base the completion rate. The problems at the secondary level, like high student turnover, are even more complicated at the postsecondary level where the forms of completion (and the stage in a person's life when that completion may occur) are much more varied. For purposes of Perkins accountability, postsecondary institutions may want to limit their completion indicators to selected major subpopulations—students 18 to 24, for example—to make definition and measurement more manageable. Such a strategy, however, means not reporting on a substantial part of technical education activity at the postsecondary level.

Placement is a longstanding measure of accountability in career and technical education. But despite years of experience with trying to measure placement in the workforce or the military, technical programs rarely have produced reliable information. Response rates to mail and telephone surveys have typically averaged about 25 percent, too low to produce much confidence in the estimates. States that have had the most success in monitoring job placement of technical education participants are those that have been able to link student records to information contained in unemployment insurance records.

Designing indicators for reporting on gender equity programs may be the easiest task under the new requirements. The law is clear—programs with less than 25 percent of one gender or the other are considered out of balance. Consequently, all that's required is good data on program enrollment by gender—information that most all secondary and postsecondary institutions have or can readily obtain.

**Identify relevant populations**—What's needed is a graduation rate for the subset of students who participate "significantly" in career and technical education. Doing that will be troublesome, to say the least.

At the secondary level, almost all high school students take at least one course in the technical curriculum, so mere participation is not a very useful distinction. And there's a wide range of technical education participation at the postsecondary level as well. Presumably, the new Perkins calls for documenting the effects of "significant" levels of participation in career and technical education or some coherent cluster of technical and

academic courses. What, then, is the degree of concentration that determines whose performance will be monitored? What are the eligible combinations of technical and academic coursetaking? If national guidance is offered, will states be willing to follow it when the national definition is at odds with their own? Right now it's a "wait and see" situation.

Then there's the issue of special populations. Are states expected to monitor each indicator for members of this group? The legislation explicitly says states will describe in quantifiable terms the progress of special populations participating in career and technical education and names six groups:

- individuals with disabilities;
- the economically disadvantaged;
- individuals preparing for nontraditional employment;
- single parents, including single pregnant women;
- displaced homemakers; and
- those with limited English skills.

Does this mean that progress must be monitored for each group individually or for special populations as a whole?

The primary problem is that many states and localities cannot track the individual performance of most special populations. In some instances the problem lies with definition or identification. At the postsecondary level, for example it may be neither legal nor desirable to identify single parents or single pregnant women in student record systems. In other instances, the problem lies in the lack of student record systems that would allow individual monitoring. For example, at the secondary level in two of the nation's largest states (California and New York), the smallest organizing unit for the state data system is the classroom, a feature that prevents producing any kind of student level data.

In such cases, states will need to create new strategies for tracking the performance of special populations. In some instances, they may be able to piggyback on data collection and reporting already implemented to satisfy requirements for other federal and state initiatives targeting special education, compensatory education or students with limited English proficiency. In other instances, states might employ a sampling strategy to collect performance information on a small but representative number of special populations.

The Education Department's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) is sponsoring a workshop in Kansas City, Mo., Feb. 4-5 to provide technical assistance to state officials who will develop their state's accountability plan under the new Perkins. The workshop most likely will be the first in a series to help states establish priorities and strategies and prepare final accountability plans to submit to the Education Department.

The National Center for Research in Vocational Education (NCRVE) will join OVAE in providing state-level technical assistance. Workshop updates will be available on the OVAE Web site, <http://inet.ed.gov/offices/OVAE>.

**Develop strategies for local implementation**—Perkins requires states to develop their own accountability systems. A critical lesson learned from the 1990 Perkins accountability require-

ments is that success depends on understanding, acceptance and effective use at the local level. Back then, states devoted considerable effort to developing performance measures and standards, but these measures and standards never became part of local practice in most states. Basic design problems such as lack of assessment tools or adequate management information systems thwarted local adoption. Equally important, most states lacked strategies for adapting state-designed measures and standards to local levels.

Success with the 1998 accountability requirements will depend critically on involving local representatives in the design of state systems and helping local providers of career and technical education learn how to use performance measures to promote program improvement and effective local management. Many educators are accustomed to viewing data as merely something to report to somebody else, not as something that can help them improve curriculum, instruction and student services. (See "Perkins Support Group" for more on NCRVE's resource on data collection for school improvement.)

The new Perkins does raise other important issues, including developing more effective tools for assessing academic and technical proficiency, integrating technical education's need for information with the larger secondary and postsecondary

information systems of states and localities and establishing credible standards for the quality of information generated by these systems at the local, state and national levels.

For some, the number and complexity of these issues may be sufficient justification for questioning the wisdom of the Perkins accountability requirements. But career and technical education does have a responsibility to demonstrate to students, educators and the public what is accomplished through their substantial investment of time and other resources. Successfully meeting that responsibility depends on understanding clearly the difficult problems that lie ahead and committing ourselves at all levels—local, state and national—to working collaboratively to find solutions. ♦

*Gary Hoachlander is president of MPR Associates Inc. and directs the firm's work as one of the sites of NCRVE.*

*Steven Klein is associate director of MPR's Program for Policy Analysis and Development.*

*Elliott Medrich contributed to this article. Medrich is director of MPR Associates Inc.—a consulting firm specializing in management, planning and research for elementary, secondary and postsecondary education based in Berkeley, California.*

## Perkins Support Group

- **The Official Guide to the Perkins Act of 1998** published by the Association for Career and Technical Education, provides the complete text of the law with an index for searching specific provisions. It also includes a section-by-section summary of the act and a comprehensive analysis that shows the differences between the new law and the previous one. The guide is \$34.95 (\$29.95 for ACTE members). To order, call (800) 826-9972, ext. 317.
- **NCRVE** (National Center for Research in Vocational Education) has a Web site at <http://vocserve.berkeley.edu>. This site allows users to search all of NCRVE's publications by keyword. *At Your Fingertips: Using Everyday Data to Improve Schools* (1998, 250 pages) is a step-by-step guide to collecting, analyzing and presenting data for school improvement initiatives. This book is available through ACTE for \$43.95 (\$39.95 for ACTE members). To order, call (800) 826-9972, ext. 317.
- **MPR Associates Inc.** has a Web site at [www.mprassociates.com](http://www.mprassociates.com). MPR also can be reached at 2150 Shattuck Ave., Suite 800, Berkeley, CA 94704; (510) 849-4942; [info@mprinc.com](mailto:info@mprinc.com).
- **OVAE** (Office of Vocational and Adult Education) in the U.S. Department of Education has a Web site at <http://inet.ed.gov/offices/OVAE>. From that home page you can jump to legislative updates regarding the new Perkins. But to view FY 1999 state plan requirements directly, go to [www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/VocEd/InfoBoard/vgui1124.html](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/VocEd/InfoBoard/vgui1124.html). OVAE also can be reached at 4090 MES, 600 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20202; (202) 205-5451; [ovae@inet.ed.gov](mailto:ovae@inet.ed.gov). Questions concerning state plan requirements can be fielded by Ron Castaldi.

# Experts Speak Out on Perkins III

by Eboni M. Zamani, UIUC

*The growing emphasis on accountability has increased the stakes for many schools that compete for state and federal funding. The proposed mandates of Perkins III have serious ramifications for community colleges. To provide our readership with a portrait of the Perkins III amendments, we gathered the national, regional, state, and local perspectives of persons who are "in the know." From the United States Department of Education (USDE) we contacted Jacqueline Woods, Community College Liaison for the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE). To understand the impact of Perkins III in Illinois, we interviewed Richard Miguel of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and Rita Fischbach of Illinois Central College. Richard provides a state perspective while Rita's comments reflect a local level. Finally, Frankie Santos Laanan considers Perkins III from another state's viewpoint, the state of California. Together these experts provide valuable insights into the future of vocational-technical education under the guidance of Perkins III.*

## A National Perspective



**Jacqueline Woods**  
Community College  
Liaison  
U.S. Department of  
Education

**UPDATE:** From your perspective as a national education leader, what are the significant changes (if any) in the federal vocational legislation (i.e., Perkins III)? And how do the changes in Perkins III impact community colleges?

**Woods:** The major changes in Perkins that affect community colleges center around two areas: 1) accountability requirements and reporting; and 2) the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) requirement regarding post-secondary participation in the one-steps. Vocational postsecondary education systems will need to implement an accountability system whereby they can report annually on all of the core indicators. They must determine measures for these indicators, baseline figures and goals.

**UPDATE:** What is the potential impact of Perkins III on the linkages between secondary, 2-year, and 4-year education (e.g., Tech Prep)?

**Woods:** Perkins III affects the linkages between secondary, 2- and 4-year education by funding Tech Prep programs to provide non-duplicative sequences of courses in career fields. Perkins III provides opportunities for all educational sectors to

come up with continuity in curriculum and strengthen learning outcomes along the continuum. It also requires that the programs provide work-based learning experiences for its participants, which involves working with business and all aspects of industry.

**UPDATE:** What challenges do you believe community colleges will have in establishing a comprehensive accountability system?

**Woods:** The challenges lie within the technical side of establishing a comprehensive accountability system. For indicators that were not previously measured, it will be difficult to establish baseline data from which performance goals can be developed. There must be data elements that provide information not only when the students are in the system, but also when they exit the system. Additionally, federal and state privacy issues relating to student identifiers will become a challenge to be dealt within the new legislation.

**UPDATE:** What issues arise when the Perkins III measures are applied to special populations?

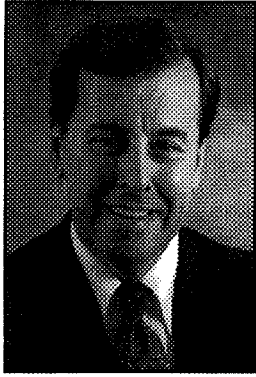
**Woods:** This question is particularly important to a state as highly diverse as Illinois which ranks among the top five states in ESL enrollment. When considering special populations, the issues and challenges that arise relate to the monitoring of these students. With the implementation of Perkins III, states will have to examine how these measures are applicable and devise new ways of assessing the performance of special populations. Special populations include individuals with barriers to educational achievement such as limited English proficiency; individuals with disabilities; economically disadvantaged families (e.g., those including foster children); those preparing for non-traditional training and employment; single parents (including single pregnant women); and displaced homemakers.

**UPDATE:** What other observations can you make regarding Perkins III, Illinois community colleges and the future of vocational-technical education in the state?

**Woods:** Perkins III allows the colleges to see the 'glass as half-full rather than half-empty.' Although the accountability issues will require additional data collection that has not been done prior to the legislation, it will also allow the colleges to document their successes better than ever before. Furthermore, those colleges that are successful using the new regulations will be able to strengthen their ties to other educational entities, business and other social service agencies by being able to coordinate services rather than duplicate them. No other institution is as experienced as community colleges at weaving together academic and career program activities. Community colleges often emerge as the primary facilitators in their communities because of their flexibility and capabilities as these comprehensive programs are established.

*Ms. Woods gratefully acknowledges insights contributed by Jennifer Hartman and Jon Weintraub, OVAE Policy Analysis staff members.*

## A State Perspective



### Richard Miguel Illinois State Board of Education

**UPDATE:** From your perspective as a state education leader, what are the significant changes (if any) in the federal vocational legislation (i.e., Perkins III)? Why are these changes significant?

**Miguel:** The most significant change in Perkins III is the emphasis on accountability. Illinois must enter into a performance contract with the U.S. Department of Education, indicating specific levels of student attainment on key core indicators of performance. Failure to meet these performance levels may result in the state losing all or part of its federal funds. Although not necessarily new to federal job training legislation, this level of accountability is new for federal education legislation.

**UPDATE:** What challenges do you believe Illinois community colleges will have in meeting these new accountability demands?

**Miguel:** The colleges will have to align their Perkins III performance indicators with those of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Whereas the Perkins III legislation provides a great deal of flexibility in implementing an accountability system, WIA does not. This will mean the colleges may lose some flexibility as they attempt to align the accountability requirements of these federal programs. Both Perkins and WIA call for statewide reporting of data. This means that colleges will have to adhere to common definitions, performance measures, accountability cohorts, data collection methods, and the like if they are to produce meaningful data at the state level.

**UPDATE:** Perkins III requires initial determination of performance indicators and measures, but requires that enhancements be made to the system in the future. What specific performance indicators and measures will Illinois community colleges be able to implement quickly, and what ones will take more time?

**Miguel:** Illinois will be able to immediately implement performance indicators related to degree and certificate completion, continuing education and employment, and participation in and completion of non-traditional programs. From our deliberations on postsecondary core indicators, the representatives of the colleges would like to see Illinois develop or acquire assessments that can demonstrate the impact that programs are having on helping students acquire technical skills and academic skills beyond the basics.

**UPDATE:** The National Assessment of Vocational Education (NAVE) indicated that, by and large, the previous Perkins II measures were not incorporated into local policy and practice. Many states struggled with them as well. Knowing this, how successful do you predict the new Perkins III accountability requirements will be?

**Miguel:** Illinois is one of the few states that took the Perkins II requirements to heart to build a performance-based accountability system. For that reason, it is one of the few states that is ready to implement the Perkins III accountability requirements, which essentially requires an information system that includes individual student records with social security numbers, linked to a number of educational and employment data bases. Fewer than 10 states have the capacity to do this at this time. Fortunately Illinois is among this elite group.

## A Local Perspective



### Rita Fischbach Illinois Central College

**UPDATE:** From your perspective as a local leader, what are the significant changes (if any) in the federal vocational legislation (i.e., Perkins III) for area community colleges?

**Fischbach:** The accountability issues, the non-targeting of programs and the emphasis on non-traditional students, will influence

how federal monies are spent. More specifically, Illinois community colleges need to integrate the Perkins III changes with the North Central Accreditation as well as Illinois Community College Board improvements. Since all students can be served, not just targeted program students and special populations, we need to determine the best way to ensure the success of our students.

**UPDATE:** What challenges do you believe Illinois community colleges will have in meeting these new accountability demands?

**Fischbach:** There are some specific actions that Illinois community colleges must take to respond to Perkins III. The purpose of the legislation should be refocused. This will allow educators and administrators to provide better support services for all vocational students. In addition, community colleges need to collect data that is not being gathered at present to develop processes that will allow institutions to document success (i.e., placement rates, certificate and degree completion rates, academic and technical achievement).

**UPDATE:** What particular group of community college students will the Perkins III measures applied to?

**Fischbach:** It is not clear which community college student group in particular will be subject to Perkins III measures. Hopefully, we can include the noncompleters who enter employment with a couple of courses. There is a possibility that programs will be broken up into many small pieces in order to have completers, but this is not the goal of the legislation. It is essential that the current Perkins measures are incorporated into the WIA plan, and the whole community should be working together.

## Another Perspective



### Frankie Santos Laanan Coast Community College District Costa Mesa, California

**UPDATE:** From your perspective, what are the significant changes in the Perkins III legislation? Why are these changes significant?

**Laanan:** The new Act eliminates several programs that were authorized, but never funded under the 1990 Act. For example, the new Act eliminates the authorization of a state council on vocational education. Numerous references to technology use in the classroom, teacher training in technology, and distance learning, are included. Several references to the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) are also found in the new legislation. Perkins III also contains stipulations to enhance coordination between vocational education and job training programs. The Act also no longer requires states to have a sex equity coordinator or a committee of practitioners. Of the four core indicators included in the new Act, "completion of vocational and technical programs that lead to nontraditional training and employment" is also new.

**UPDATE:** Although you have greater familiarity with California community colleges, California and Illinois face similar challenges. How do you see the changes in Perkins III impacting Illinois community colleges?

**Laanan:** The state of Illinois will need to develop valid performance levels for the core indicators. The challenge will be to operationalize the core indicators so they can be readily measured and reported by the state's data system. Perkins III does not require states to set aside funds for a gender equity coordinator; however, states may use Perkins funds for this purpose. The new version is now termed "nontraditional training and employment." Because specific federal dollars are not earmarked to address the gender equity issue, colleges will have to decide whether or not to allocate funding support for gender equity programs at the local level. Another change that will impact Illinois community colleges is the need for institutions to develop partnerships with business and industry (at the local and state level). The need for collaboration and coordination between educational institutions and industry will impact the efforts to follow-up former students in the world of work. One of the most difficult challenges for community college coordinating boards is the ability to account for their students in the workplace. The ability to collect information from students and their employers to evaluate program effectiveness or employer satisfaction will be a methodological challenge in the years to come.

**UPDATE:** What specific performance indicators and measures will Illinois community colleges be able to implement quickly, and what ones will take more time? How do you see advancements being implemented on a state and local basis over time?

**Laanan:** The measures (or core indicators) that Illinois community colleges can implement quickly include student attainment of vocational, technical and academic skills proficiency; acquisition of secondary or postsecondary degrees or credentials; and retention in postsecondary education.

The performance indicators that could take more time include placement in employment; completion of vocational and technical programs that lead to nontraditional training and employment.

**UPDATE:** What other observations can you make regarding Perkins III and the future of vocational-technical education in the state?

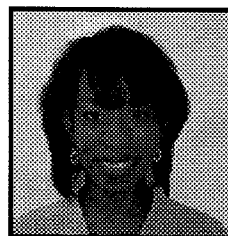
**Laanan:** The central goals of this new legislation are to improve student achievement and prepare students for postsecondary education, further learning, and careers. Educating and training Illinois residents to possess technical skills, as well as transferable skills, to compete in a competitive state and national economy should be a primary goal. It will only be to Illinois' benefit to have a productive and highly skilled workforce. Like any piece of federal legislation, the support for vocational education at the state and national level will depend on the effectiveness of programs and positive results achieved by vocational graduates.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, much of what the leaders had to share regarding the new Perkins amendments provides insight into what issues and concerns have been incorporated into policies and practices affecting community colleges. In terms of the future of Perkins III and two-year institutions, the overwhelming recommendation of our experts is that state plans should articulate program effectiveness through the use of core indicators, as well as provide demonstrations of vocational-technical education student performance and improvement. Though these requirements will not be implemented easily, they are necessary to build a better system of vocational-technical education at all levels. ♦

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*Eboni Zamani is a doctoral student studying higher education administration in the Department of Educational Organization and Leadership. Her research interests include community college leadership, affirmative action in higher education and participation and retention of students of color at two- and four-year institutions of higher learning.*

# Tech Prep Evaluation: Where We've Been and Where We're Going

by K. Peter Kuchinke, UIUC

From the very beginning of Tech Prep, legislators envisioned comprehensive program evaluation of activities at the state and local levels. The 1990 Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act (Perkins II) mandated that each federal grant recipient "provide and budget for an independent evaluation of grant activities," conduct an evaluation "both formative and summative in nature," and base the evaluation on "student achievement, completion, placement rates, and project and product spread and transportability" (American Vocational Association, 1992, p. 44). These requirements, however, were intended to be minimum prerequisites for program funding. The US Department of Education gave authority to and explicitly encouraged states to implement a "local evaluation that is broader in scope than the minimum required [under federal law]" (American Vocational Association, 1992, pp. 4-5).

## Initial Neglect of Evaluation

Despite this mandate, implementation of evaluation came slow. Three years into the program, an *Education Week* article based on a 1993 NCVRE study noted that Tech Prep programs were "still in an embryonic phase of development" and pointed out that there was "little consistency in purpose, design, or curriculum across states and of states" (Sommerfeld, 1993, p. 12). Two years later, Bragg (1995) concluded that "evaluation of any kind has been one of the most neglected components of Tech Prep" (p. 23).

There are many reasons for this neglect. Among them are a lack of resources and expertise to perform valid evaluations; a focus on program planning, development and implementation rather than evaluation; the slow start-up of many programs; fear that Tech Prep funding would cease; and failure by state agencies to enforce the systematic collection of evaluation information.

Nevertheless, by 1997 Custer, Ruhland, and Steward (1997) were able to report that nationwide 77% of consortia had evaluation programs in place. When looking at the content of these evaluation systems, however, it becomes apparent that most focused on Tech Prep program features. Minnesota's evaluation model, for instance, centered on four Tech Prep systems: Curriculum and Instruction, Marketing, Student Assessment, and Support Services and Counseling and seven systems activities: Overall Planning, Staff Development, Special Populations, Curriculum Integration, Articulation, Partnerships, and Evaluation (Pucel, Brown, & Kuchinke, 1996). This systemic focus can be explained by the fact that most consortia spent the majority of the early funding years on planning and development. Tech Prep, after all, required restructuring and fundamental change in the way education was conceived, planned, and delivered. In this context, process evaluation was important, timely, and meaningful (Custer, Ruhland, & Steward, 1997).

Only in recent years are there sufficient numbers of Tech Prep students and graduates to make outcome-focused evaluation feasible and meaningful.

A final reason for the slow adoption of Tech Prep evaluation, especially related to student outcomes, is the program implementation pattern. Many consortia spent the first several years with planning and developing the institutional infrastructure for Tech Prep. In the spring of 1992, for example, close to three-quarter of all consortia (72%) were still involved in the planning phase and had not yet begun enrolling secondary students (Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1994). In those early years, then, planning, not evaluation was the priority. Where evaluation was conducted, it focused on process issues, such as articulation, marketing, or staff development. Enrollments increased over the following years as more programs "went live." In Illinois, for example, the number of secondary Tech Prep students for fiscal years 1993 and 1994 were small and constant (6,526 and 6,736 respectively), but quadrupled in 1995 to 24,598, rising to 44,474 in 1996, 52,620 in 1997, and 75,062 in 1998. (Source: Illinois State Board of Education). Only in recent years are there sufficient numbers of Tech Prep students and graduates to make outcome-focused evaluation feasible and meaningful.

## Increasing Need for Evaluation

With rising enrollments and the conviction among administrators that Tech Prep was "here to stay," scholars began to take note of the lack of reliable program outcome information. Especially lacking was information related to actual student benefits. Bragg (1997) concluded that "the number of local consortia that were able to provide . . . data in the area of participation and completion was so limited as to make most of the estimates meaningless" (p. 10).

The focus on student outcomes has become particularly salient with the passage of the 1998 Carl Perkins Vocational-Technical Education Act (Perkins III) that mandates stringent accountability measures. The Act requires states to monitor performance using four core indicators: student attainment of academic and technical skill proficiencies, student attainment of high school and post-secondary graduation, job placement and retention, and student participation and completion leading to nontraditional employment (see Hoachlander and Klein, pp. 2-4 in this issue). Tech Prep evaluation under Perkins III places an explicit focus on clear, valid, and reliable information, collected at the building, consortium, and state levels, with clear lines of accountability and funding consequences in case of under-performance.

## Evaluation and Perkins III

What then are some of the attributes of evaluation systems that can meet the requirements of Perkins III? First, successful state evaluation systems have been planned, developed, tested, and



refined over time with active and vigorous participation from a broad range of local, consortium, and state stakeholders and input from evaluation experts. Such systems typically include a core of statewide indices as well as local measures.

Second, evaluation is a value-added activity in successful cases, rather than an administrative burden. Collecting, analyzing, and reporting information are viewed within the context of continuous process improvement. Valid and reliable data are critical for informed decision-making and tracking the system over time.

Third, leaders at the state, consortium, and local levels support evaluation actively and visibly, holding administrators accountable for collecting and acting upon information, and rewarding local initiatives that improve evaluation practices. This includes making time and resources available for data reporting and analysis and professional development to understand and make good use of the information. Lastly, good evaluation systems have managed to make maximal use of existing data sources, use a variety of data sources and methods, and minimize the administrative and data collection burden for evaluation.

Consortia in many states continue to struggle with several evaluation issues. These include finding a balance between local autonomy in tailoring Tech Prep programs and evaluation, and state centralization to ensure conformity and accountability. Because Tech Prep developed from local initiatives, many states also struggle with common definitions, a prerequisite for comparisons of information across consortia and reporting of statewide information. A final barrier lies in the difficulty to coordinate data and information across different agencies, such as secondary, post-secondary, and work-related student outcomes.

With Perkins III, legislators have sent an unambiguous signal for accountability in state and local Tech Prep efforts, focused very clearly on student outcomes. While process measures, such as articulation agreements and numbers of advisory board members are important, they are only a means to an end and not ends in themselves. Perkins III requires clarity over exactly how Tech Prep efforts benefit students, and student outcome information must form the center of Tech Prep evaluation efforts. Reliable and valid information on a system as complex and evolving as Tech Prep is not easy to obtain. If Tech Prep is to grow, however, all stakeholders must refocus and renew their efforts to implement systematic evaluation systems that can put solid ground under the many anecdotal signs of the promises and successes of the Tech Prep education reform. ♦

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*Dr. K. Peter Kuchinke is an assistant professor in the department of Human Resource Education. His research interests focus on the evolution of the field of Human Resource Education, leadership development, and public/private workforce education partnerships. Dr. Kuchinke conducts much of his research in a U.S./European comparative context.*



### 1999 Meetings You Should Know About

- **June 1-2** — National Conclave on Leadership of Two-Year Institutions of Higher Education, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Allerton Park, Monticello, IL, (217) 333-0807.
- **June 7-8** — Connections '99 Conference (Education-to-Careers, Tech Prep), Springfield, IL, (800) 877-1478, <http://wolf.its.ilstu.edu/connections2000/>.
- **June 20-23** — Innovations '99: League for Innovation in the Community College, New Orleans, LA, voice: (949) 367-2884; fax: (949) 367-2885, <http://www.league.org/>.
- **August 1-6** — Executive Leadership Institute, League for Innovation in the Community College, Newport Beach Marriott Hotel, voice: (949) 367-2884; fax: (949) 367-2885, <http://www.league.org/>.
- **October 7-9** — National Tech Prep Network (NTPN) Annual Conference: "Tech Prep/School-to-Career: Planning for the New Millennium", Pittsburgh, PA, <http://www.cord.org/>.
- **October 20-23** — 1999 Conference on Information Technology, League for Innovation in Community Colleges, Co-hosted by Moraine Valley Community College Chicago Hyatt Regency, voice: (949) 367-2884; fax: (949) 367-2885.
- **October 21-23** — National Council for Occupational Education (NCOE), Seattle, WA, <http://www.NCOEonline.org/99conf/>.

# Workforce Development: Emerging Patterns Across the United States

by Maxine Russman, Black Hawk College

## Review of the Book *Toward Order from Chaos: State Efforts to Reform Workforce Development Systems*

W. N. Grubb, N. Badway, D. Bell, B. Chi, C. King, J. Herr, H. Prince, R. Kazis, L. Hicks, and J. C. Taylor  
Berkeley, CA: National Center for Research in Vocational Education, (NCRVE), 1999  
145 pages, \$10.50, <http://ncrve.berkeley.edu/>

## *Workforce Development: A New Study*

Workforce development has been, in recent years, at the forefront of discussions among federal policy makers and others, concerning the consolidation of training programs, the development of one-stop delivery centers, the implementation of "work first" initiatives under welfare reform, and the passage of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. An important contribution to this debate is *Toward Order from Chaos*, an NCRVE study by Norton Grubb et. al., that identifies ten states—Florida, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, and Wisconsin (with some references to Arizona)—as national leaders in their reform of workforce development systems. The states in the study have initiated reforms either out of concern over economic issues, duplication of workforce development programs, or in anticipation of new federal legislation.

The ten states were chosen for inclusion by several national organizations: National Governors' Association; Network, an affiliate of the American Association of Community College (AACC); the State Higher Education Executive Officers Organization (SHEEO); and the Education Commission of the States (ECS). Noticeably absent were the National Association of Workforce Development Boards (formally the National Association of Private Industry Councils/ NAPIC), and the National Employment and Training Association, training-focused organizations that oversee JTPA programs. The authors' research methodology included extensive interviews with state-level officials responsible for JTPA, one-stop centers, welfare-to-work programs, adult education, economic development, and personnel from community college and technical institutes. In addition, two site visits to each of the states were conducted during which local heads of community colleges, adult education, JTPA, welfare offices, local coordination boards and one-stop centers were interviewed.

## Implementing Reform

Based on their examination of workforce development, the researchers were able to describe overall state strategies for implementing reform. A state agency or office is created, some

with only advisory responsibilities and others with administrative authority to allocate funds. Advisory councils are less powerful and influential than those with administrative authority. Also, local or regional counterparts are established to carry out policy, and most have created a single point of access to the state's system through one-stop centers that attempt to coordinate training activities. This access usually involves a hierarchy of coordination from information sharing on the lower end, to referrals among agencies, and occasionally, joint service delivery at the highest level.

A notable finding of the research is the variety of mechanisms that states use to reform their workforce development systems. Grubb et al. grouped these approaches into two categories: Institutional-Building Mechanisms and Market-like Mechanisms. Institutional-Building Mechanisms are efforts to improve quality and connections in and among programs. Examples include establishing advisory councils, consolidating of agencies and/or programs, providing state technical assistance to locals, and impacting cultural change through "redesigning systems." Market-like Mechanisms attempt to mimic incentives to enhance competition and customer choice. These strategies include: 1) performance measures and standards that shift emphasis from inputs to outcomes; 2) performance-based budgeting; 3) competition among providers; 4) competition through subcontracting, where government becomes the brokers of services rather than direct providers; 5) voucher mechanisms; 6) consumer information to increase consumer choice; and, 7) tax incentives for businesses and regulatory relief. Most states in the study have utilized both types of mechanisms, but the research concludes that states are moving toward greater use of market-like strategies.

The ten states also varied in their levels of control over local programs. Some states were highly respectful of local autonomy and had a laissez-faire attitude (Arizona). Most, however, wanted to avoid local mandates and provided some state guidance, which is referred to as "Centrally Guided, Locally Directed" efforts (Oklahoma, Iowa, Oregon, and North Carolina). A few states, however, considered education and training state prerogatives and were much more directive in their state policies (Florida and Michigan).

Successful implementation of reform is closely tied to local response to state reform. If locals are not interested in cooperation and coordination, they are resistant. If they are ahead of the state in coordination, they resent state policy. One particular inconsistency in state policy—requiring local coordination, while encouraging fragmentation at the state level—has caused "near-universal resentment."

## Other Key Issues

Other key issues addressed in the study include: 1) the complex role of employers, whether to "involve" or "engage" them; 2) the varied meanings of "system building" among states; 3) the conflict between "work first" policies of Welfare Reform and workforce development systems focusing on developing "higher-ordered skills"; 4) lack of coordinating economic development efforts promoting demand-side economic strategies to workforce development, supply-side, efforts; and 5) questioning the effectiveness of improving program quality through performance measures. In the search for quality, Grubb et al. asked state and local officials to nominate exemplary programs. Most could not respond to the question and were unable to define criteria for "exemplary" programs. Most officials interpret program success in terms of statistics collected.

Recently, the separation of employment training programs from education has been an underlying theme in the literature. *Toward Order from Chaos* refers to Norton Grubb's belief that separating training and education has been counter-productive (*Creating Coherent Workforce Preparation Systems from the Quagmire of Education and Job Training*, 1996). The conclusion of the study addresses the future of workforce development systems by comparing its process to that of the education system. According to Grubb et al., the study does not mean to suggest that "there is anything inevitable about workforce development going the way of education." Yet, given the similarities in initial development, the education system with its long history is a logical model with which to compare the relatively new entity of workforce development.

## Conclusion

Grubb et al. conclude that the direction of change in workforce development programs "is unmistakable." The structure of local/state efforts is moving toward greater coordination and coherence, even if, as in the development of the education system, it is

uneven and varied from state to state. No single national vision, however, is emerging, and no state is completely consistent with its vision.

Grubb et al. demonstrate in this study a thorough understanding of workforce development and its complex sub-systems: JTPA, vocational education, community colleges, adult education, welfare-to-work, one-stop centers, etc. The implications for state and federal policy are timely and bold. They even recommend undoing the damaging aspect of "work first" under welfare reform. Though much of this research was conducted prior to the passage of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, many of its conclusions are integral to the new legislation: the state-local structure, coordination and cooperation through unified plans and one-stop centers, and implementation of Market-Like Mechanisms by requiring performance measures and vouchers.

In *Toward Order from Chaos*, Grubb et al. posed the fundamental question: What do we as citizens, employees, policymakers, and employers want in our workforce development system? This is an excellent and very timely question for anyone who is or will be involved in implementing the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) on either the state or local levels. ♦



*Maxine Russman has been involved in workforce development and education for fifteen years. She is currently a program coordinator at Black Hawk College in Moline, Illinois. Maxine is a doctoral student specializing in Community College Leadership at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.*

## Welcome Dr. Laanan to Illinois

In August, 1999, Dr. Frankie Santos Laanan will be joining the faculty in the Department of Human Resource Education, as Assistant Professor in Community College Leadership, College of Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He has been Senior Research Analyst of vocational education and institutional research at Coast Community College District, in Costa Mesa, California since February 1997. As the State Contractor, he has been working on a two-year contract awarded by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. His primary responsibilities have been to analyze vocational education core measures data, and to facilitate administrative and faculty assessment of labor market information. Dr. Laanan also provided the State Chancellor's office with statistical and methodological input

regarding the assessment and evaluation of outcomes for vocational students. Prior to working at the Coast District, he worked at the Center for the Study of Community Colleges and has conducted national research projects on issues pertaining to community colleges, faculty, and students. He has published several research articles on transfer, adjustment process of transfer students, and student outcomes and assessment. His most recent publication is a co-edited *New Directions for Community Colleges* volume (December 1998) that examines the economic benefit of attending community colleges. Dr. Laanan completed his Ph.D. in higher education and organizational change from the University of California, Los Angeles.



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