



The long anticipated passage of Perkins IV, formally known as the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006, ushered with it a renewed focus on improving career and technical education. This issue of UPDATE includes interviews with two people actively involved in the reauthorization process and other articles related to key components and emphases of the new Perkins Act.

Perkins IV: An Interview with Kimberly Green

by Catherine Kirby

Kimberly Green is the Executive Director of the National Association of State Directors of Career and Technical Education (NASDCTE). In early March Catherine Kirby, UPDATE Editor, conducted this interview with Ms. Green.

UPDATE: Many of our readers are familiar with NASDCTE but others aren't. Could you summarize what your group does for both secondary and postsecondary career and technical education?

MS. GREEN: Our organization was founded back in the early 1900s, when the federal government first started investing in career and technical education, as a means to interface with each state's contact person in [what was then called] vocational education. Over time, our organization has grown, but we've always maintained that focus of serving states. Our core membership is the state directors of career-technical education (CTE) who are employed in the agency that gets the Perkins funding. As an organization, we focus our efforts on advocacy and awareness of CTE with a variety of stakeholders: Congress, employer organizations, trade organizations, other federal agencies, and other education groups. Our priorities primarily focus on CTE's connections to education reform, workforce development, and economic development and making sure that there's appropriate policy that supports that mission as well as the resources available to support that mission.

Professional development is a big part of our work both in providing support to individual states and to the whole CTE community through our two national conferences as well as the annual Career Clusters Institute http://www.careertech.org/show/career_clusters_institute that includes agenda items and focus on both secondary and postsecondary issues. What we're finding is that while there certainly are some issues that are more a priority for one level of education than another, most of our agenda items are ones that are common across both secondary and postsecondary education. Lastly, we serve by creating products and resources for our members. We do a monthly newsletter, research briefs, and some products in support of the National Career Clusters. <http://www.careerclusters.org/resources/misc/16clusters.pdf>. All of these align to our core mission of that connection between education reform, workforce development, and economic development.

UPDATE: In fact, your organization was instrumental in creating the 16 career cluster model back in 2002 which many states, including Illinois, have adopted. Please explain the advantages of conceptualizing curricula within this model. For example, are there specific measurable gains made by early adopters of this model and how does it help students, parents, teachers, and counselors make choices?

MS. GREEN: I could talk about this for hours. One is that we have seen broad adoption of career clusters as a vehicle to transform what we thought of as (old) vocational education to (new) CTE, so it's a vehicle for change. It has helped us re-conceptualize CTE,

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thinking beyond the occupational areas we have traditionally served. Also, it has prompted us to think about how we deliver instruction of content that's broader, more than job-specific preparation, so that it's more viable in the 21st century.

Our organization as well as CTE are recognized as being early adopters, responsive to the economy and to change; that is important from a messaging and marketing perspective. We know some early adopter states like Maryland and Oregon have seen measurable gains in their student achievement outcomes, where CTE students are outperforming all other student populations on academic tests. Using career clusters as a transformative tool for CTE to serve more students, integrate more rigorous academics, and encourage more students to go onto postsecondary is being born out in the data that we see for those states. The early adopters are seeing increases in their enrollment because they see CTE as an option that expands possibilities for students, exposing them to a much broader array of career possibilities and a variety of stopping out points along a career pathway. That makes it very attractive to both parents and students. We have also seen some very encouraging information about reducing the need for remediation. The College and Careers Transition Initiative (CCTI) project <http://www.league.org/league/projects/ccti/index.html> has some great data that show when you implement a quality career cluster and pathway between secondary and postsecondary education, the alignment of instruction results in greater effectiveness at transition, lowers need for remediation, increases persistence, and improves postsecondary graduation rates, particularly on-time graduation. The data are very encouraging in the places that have adopted it.

UPDATE: Within the current cluster model are 81 career pathways¹ and untold numbers of Programs of Study that could be developed by the state or local providers of CTE. Local recipients of Perkins funds, according to the law, must develop or offer at least one Program of Study. Based on the legislation and from what you know of effective CTE programs, what do you believe are the core components of Programs of Study that will ensure Perkins IV results in more rigorous and relevant CTE programs?

MS. GREEN: If you want to, you can look at the language in the law of Perkins IV and what it defines as a Program of Study (POS) and see old "voc ed" in there. It is important that people look at the POS provisions in the context of the entire piece of legislation as a vision of where we're trying to move CTE toward. When you put all those pieces together, then you see the power of a Program of Study: taking traditional CTE to the next

¹There are pending changes to the titles of some clusters and pathways. New titles will be unveiled at the 6th Annual Career Clusters Institute in June 2008.

level which involves academic and technical content aligned, supported, and integrated. Implementing Programs of Study involves secondary and postsecondary elements that are streamlined for effective student transition, and embedded in them is seamless transfer of credit, totally portable and in a non-duplicative sequence of instruction. Probably the thing that is most significant in my mind about POS is that we look differently at what is being taught. It's not about teaching someone for a particular job but rather, from the beginning, exposing students to an entire industry. Over the sequence of instruction the Program of Study narrows like a funnel, giving students more specificity as they make choices of what job they're interested in, but the starting point is much broader than a traditional CTE sequence. That, to me, is the power of Programs of Study and what is most appropriate for the 21st century workforce.

UPDATE: At the secondary level many CTE courses have been cut to accommodate efforts including curricular strategies aimed to improve NCLB outcomes. With a sometimes limited selection of CTE offerings, what role can Programs of Study play in the larger arena of high school reform?

MS. GREEN: Where [students] start in the sequence for a Program of Study is going to be very different depending on the

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delivery system. For example, in Oklahoma's POS model, they will get to some content specificity in the high school because they start earlier. But where a student may only be able to take a sequence of two courses, it will be important to think hard about what to do with those two courses. In some cases, the focus will be restricted to a broad level introduction to an industry. More advanced content would come through some dual credit courses or something that's

done in collaboration with the postsecondary institution. In yet other models, students won't get specific content instruction until they go to a postsecondary institution. You have to consider how many course titles you have to offer within the school's schedule and you craft a Program of Study that has enough meaning to it that will engage students.

I remember talking to Scott Hess (at the U.S. Department of Education) who started a lot of this work with career clusters. He said, "[Within the Health Science cluster] if you're only able to provide a sequence of two courses in high school, giving students two courses toward a CNA is not going to help them [as much as] giving students a high quality anatomy and physiology course that prepares them for a variety of postsecondary health occupational programs, especially a course that offers postsecondary credit which will help move students along the spectrum much more quickly."

UPDATE: Perkins legislation is more prescriptive about what kinds of professional development it requires and how it's delivered. What kinds of programs should providers of these opportunities create to best support the intent of the law?

MS. GREEN: The law is more specific in that professional development must meet the requirements that are defined in NCLB which means that it is more than one shot workshops but rather, more sustainable, intensive interventions over a period of time. The way I interpret that is to include an evaluation of the effectiveness of professional development activities, making sure that the people you're providing it to are gaining the knowledge, implementing it, and there is a feedback loop for improvement. And there is definitely a focus on connection to the accountability indicators – investing and targeting professional development to areas where you're perhaps not meeting your performance targets.

UPDATE: The new law includes separate core indicators for secondary and postsecondary students. For secondary students, one that has many people asking questions relates to the “attainment of CTE skill proficiencies, including student achievement on technical assessments that are aligned with industry-recognized standards, if available and appropriate.”² This has a lot of people concerned. What can you say about that?

MS. GREEN: There are a whole slew of issues around both what exists at the secondary level and the challenges there, as well as what doesn't exist. Part of the issue is that there aren't any assessments that align with that broader curriculum and instruction, if that is what is offered at the high school level. Often times you can't get into enough depth of instruction at the secondary level to be able to have a student be qualified to sit for an industry assessment. Plus, many of them are very expensive and a number of states have restrictions of being able to pay for student participation in the assessments because they are viewed as individually benefiting someone, as opposed to the NCLB assessment that just captures demographic information. What do you do if you have to align a program to an assessment when there is no assessment out there? What do you use in place of it? The cost of constructing a technical assessment system is something that is overwhelming to a lot of states.

A group of folks have been convened by the USDOE to talk about a potential solution for the secondary system. One idea is where a third party organization would create an item bank aligned to the career cluster knowledge and skills statements at the foundation level and the pathway level. States that choose to belong to a consortium could have assessments customized for their Programs of Study drawn from this national item bank. They would still meet the third party assessment requirements that the USDOE is strongly recommending as a valid and reliable requirement of the assessment (as opposed to a teacher developed assessment). It would also allow for alignment to that particular state's standards that they've identified for

Programs of Study. This discussion is at the very early stages but is getting a lot of interest from states that want to make the instructional shift to clusters but recognize that they have to have an assessment component to that system.

UPDATE: Related to postsecondary accountability, what do you think are the most significant shifts in the new legislation?

MS. GREEN: All of the postsecondary indicators are the same as they were under Perkins III except that there is no longer an academic achievement performance indicator at the postsecondary level. What is different is that the stakes are higher. There is a requirement for negotiation between the state and each eligible institution at the postsecondary level, driving home the idea of using the data to drive change and using the data to institute a performance management system. That's a significant shift in itself.

On the specific performance indicators, the one that's received the most air time is technical assessments which we also mentioned earlier related to the secondary level. That comes largely out of the fact that Congress wants some way of demonstrating that its investment in career-technical education is resulting in the attainment of some technical skills. The way they've chosen to document that is through a technical assessment of some sort. Probably the thing that is most controversial right now is what that means at the postsecondary level. Clearly, there are industry certificates and credentials; where there is a bit of contention between a lot of the postsecondary communities and the USDOE is whether or not a postsecondary degree should also qualify as a measure of technical skill attainment. Right now the USDOE does not allow for that; it is a separate performance indicator. Certainly, the stakes are higher, and capturing the quality of the data is also a significant focus in the eyes of USDOE with the states and thereby the states with their local grant recipients.

UPDATE: There is a new subsection in Perkins IV related to the possibility of sanctions if 90% of the negotiated state and local performance levels are not met. What do you advise Perkins recipients to understand about the sanctions language in the new law?

MS. GREEN: People shouldn't dismiss the sanctions nor should they run in fear of them. Much like NCLB, the reason sanctions are in there is to make people take note of the accountability system . . . [which] is really about trying to improve programs. I don't think that the goal is to sanction anyone, but it's about making people focus on their data, its quality, and using it to make decisions. That has not happened in the past. Locals filed their reports to the state about what they did with their money, the report got sent to Washington, and that was the end of it. [The sanction language] is kind of a hammer, if you will, to make people be more serious about data and accountability. There are plenty of options within the law to try to help people be successful in achieving their targets.

²Perkins Act of 2006: *The Official Guide, 2006, Association for Career and Technical Education [ACTE]*, p.20.

UPDATE: Related to data, many of the indicators require the sharing of information across systems that many times do not have a common way to identify students. This kind of data tracking is currently beyond the capacity of some states' systems to accomplish. What provisions are there for states and local systems to gradually increase their capacity to meet these demands?

MS. GREEN: The law is silent on this. The USDOE does look at states' capacity, and there is an expectation that over time they'll work toward improving the quality of their data by institutionalizing some systems that will help with the sharing of information, but there's no specific timeline. Many folks have said that they wish that the federal government would, in some way, fund it or be much more specific about this requirement so that they could get beyond some of the in-state hurdles to sharing the data. The lack of resources is one of the big challenges to sharing the data, and there are privacy issues that people have concerns about, but the law is silent on both of those.

UPDATE: Are you aware of any initiatives at the federal level to clear up common interpretations of FERPA, which many local administrators often cite as the reason they cannot, or will not, share student record data?

MS. GREEN: The feds would say that FERPA is not the issue, that FERPA is really not a barrier, and that there are states that share records all the time. There are provisions within FERPA that allow for record sharing for the purposes of this sort of accountability. It is probably true that many states' attorneys general are much more cautious than the FERPA statute requires. Probably more so, the issue in a lot of states is whether or not they have the resources for a student record information system that is common across the learner levels. A lot of states have a student record information system, but it's only K-12 or it's only postsecondary, not a lifelong system. Financial resources often tend to be the real answer, but as you inferred, people hide behind privacy issues as a rationale.

UPDATE: One of the exciting things about Perkins IV is that it expands focus to include baccalaureate level education. Although the four-year institutions don't receive Perkins dollars, what can community colleges do with Perkins funds to promote the law's intent to encourage more CTE students to consider a baccalaureate degree as part of their career preparation?

MS. GREEN: When we were drafting the legislation, the reason that the four-year college piece was put in there was to seriously promote the idea of a comprehensive Program of Study, that when students think about a career it does not end at the end of a two-year degree program. We're really about promoting life long learning. That means that we need to provide information to students about all of the options along the entire

educational spectrum. There are specific provisions in Perkins about having conversations with four-year institutions about transfer, about having four-year institutions at the table when crafting articulation agreements and insuring that the credit that is shared between two-year colleges and high schools can also be shared between two-year colleges and four-year institutions. One of the specific things community colleges can do is make sure that the four-year institutions are at the table when they're crafting their Programs of Study.

UPDATE: Local uses of Perkins funds have two categories, *required* and *permissive*. Of the permissive uses of funds, describe what you believe CTE leaders could do to best improve CTE?

MS. GREEN: What first comes to mind is a long conversation that we had during the reauthorization process about whether or not equipment was an allowable use of funds. There was a period of time when Congress had on the table that we could

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not spend any Perkins money on equipment. Obviously, in the Law, you can use the funds for equipment. However, the reason there was a discussion on eliminating it from the list of uses of funds was a strong interest that we should be targeting our Perkins funds on improving teaching and learning. We have to remember that the focus of Perkins IV is about program

improvement and not about sustainability. When a local initiative, or state director for that matter, is looking how to choose the target of Perkins funds, I strongly encourage them to look at what they need to drive innovation in their program to make sure that they're improving CTE. One lens that should be used is found in the data, seeing where weaknesses are and directing the state or local resources toward those weaknesses – whether it's professional development, technical assistance, equipment, etc.

If you think about the instructional change that needs to happen to adopt this notion of Programs of Study and clusters, it's a sea change in what we're teaching and how we're collaborating among the learner levels. You would find that this focus on teaching and learning, professional development, and technical assistance is probably an area that will be a priority for most, if not all states. How that will translate at the local level will probably vary a bit, but I think that's going to be an overarching theme guiding the uses of funds.

UPDATE: Obviously a portion of state leadership funds must be directed to serving the special populations as defined under Perkins.³ What are the challenges for serving these populations

³*Special populations* as defined in Perkins IV include "individuals with disabilities; individuals from economically disadvantaged families, including foster children; individuals preparing for non-traditional fields; single parents, including single pregnant women; displaced homemakers; and individuals with individuals with limited English proficiency" (ACTE, 2006, p.97).

and providing them with options for high skill, high demand, or high wage occupations and the attainment of self sufficiency?

MS. GREEN: Perkins has always had a historical focus on serving students that fall under the *special populations* category and this continues under Perkins IV. There are some concerns that Perkins IV is moving CTE into elite status as opposed to serving all students who choose to enter into CTE programs. The focus on special populations is prominent in the accountability measures, requiring disaggregation of data and targeted performance indicators. This focus is to ensure that these students are served equally and are performing as well. In many ways, it's a sleeper provision that people forget about until they start looking at their data and disaggregating it to make sure that they are serving all populations.

Remember that the law provides for Programs of Study to align to high skill, high demand OR high wage occupations; it could be any one of those three, not necessarily all of those three combined. Many states are looking at alignment of their POS to state economic development needs. While a lot of those needs fall into all three categories, some may only fall into only one of the three.

UPDATE: Many adult students are among the categories of special populations. And there is increased awareness nationally about the need for developing more adult career pathways for those students who enroll in community colleges. What do you have to say about adult services related to Perkins?

MS. GREEN: Adults served by the CTE community still have a place within the Perkins Act although I think that the strong prevalence on NCLB throughout Perkins IV trends toward focusing on students transitioning immediately out of high school into postsecondary education. With that said, there are many states that have very strong and vibrant adult CTE populations and they are continuing that focus under Perkins IV. We have seen a number of states look at the progression of the Program of Study being focused on *content* progression as opposed to *grade level* progression, so that they can look at a sequence of instruction and determine what students should be able to do as an entry level worker in any given field. That can apply to someone who is an adult re-entering the workforce or it can apply to a high school student transitioning into the work place. There's a lot of applicability of the work that is created for Programs of Study. It may just be packaged differently for adults, but it's the same sequence of instruction focused on what is needed to be successful in the workplace, regardless of the age of the student.

UPDATE: In early February it was announced that President Bush's proposed FY09 budget terminates funding for Perkins which he also recommended in FY06, FY07, and FY08. Even though funding was not eliminated in previous budget years because of Congress, we've not seen any increases that could infuse CTE with the resources needed to keep the programs vital

and relevant to changes in technology and workforce demands. With the uncertainty that surrounds an election year, what can and should CTE leaders do to ensure a secure future for CTE and improve its current status within the larger context of education?

MS. GREEN: There are a lot of economic challenges and workforce challenges facing our country so I think that it's very important for elected officials at all levels to be aware of the role that CTE can and is playing to support the economic development and workforce development of our nation. That will resonate and have a very powerful impact because every candidate is talking about what we can do to prevent a recession, what we can do to help our economy get back on track. So, making connections to that will be very important.

Our country has focused a lot of resources on NCLB. Perkins comes out of the same bucket that NCLB funding comes out of, as well as special education funding. One of the challenges is that in order to get the increase in Perkins, it's taken away from someplace else, and that's been a hard argument to make. As a CTE community, we've been very effective at telling anecdotal stories about what we do to support a particular individual and how CTE has changed their life, but the systemic data that tell the story about CTE and Perkins has only begun to percolate up. The more we can get that hard evidence and proof that we're having an impact, the greater chances we have of being able to get a bigger piece of the pie for CTE.

UPDATE: Finally, what else would you like our readers to know about Perkins IV?

MS. GREEN: The one thing that stands out to me is the importance of secondary and postsecondary collaboration. Perkins structurally still keeps the systems separate. There are separate funding formulas, separate uses of funds, and separate accountability measures. And yet, if you think about the vision for Programs of Study and for CTE generally, the responsibility and demand for collaboration between secondary and postsecondary are very evident. There is a great example that I'd like to draw people's attention to. In Minnesota, they're trying to get around this duality. To do that, they are requiring that there be a single application at the local level between secondary and postsecondary so they are jointly responsible. It takes some bold change to be able to realize the vision of what secondary and postsecondary collaboration could be in a state or a system. It is certainly an experiment to see how it works, but the idea of shared responsibility and shared planning is something that can definitely be done through the planning process. It would be a good exercise to determine what other incentives states and locals can put in place to promote the sort of collaboration and program improvement innovation messages that Perkins IV represents. ♦

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Perkins IV: An Interview with AACC's Jim Hermes

by Catherine Kirby

Jim Hermes is a Senior Legislative Associate with the American Association of Community Colleges. The legislative issues Mr. Hermes covers include workforce development and vocational education, technology policy, international education and veterans' education. In February Catherine Kirby, UPDATE Editor, conducted this interview with Mr. Hermes.

UPDATE: It is evident the AACC played a big role in Perkins re-authorization. What is your role now as implementation begins?

MR. HERMES: We joined the state directors and ACTE and other partners in the regional workshops that were conducted last year. We also work directly with our own affiliated councils that are independent groups such as the National Council of State Directors of Community Colleges (NCSDDC) (see <http://www.statedirectors.org/>). [Illinois Community College Board President and CEO] Geoff Obrzut is an active member of the NCSDDC. It's an invaluable group for hearing about what is going on with some of these issues related to implementation. Another resource is the Workforce Development Institute where we get into a lot of these issues with members of our field.

UPDATE: Perkins IV reflects important policy shifts for state and local implementation of career and technical education. Tell us what you observed during the reauthorization process and how those changes might impact colleges, programs, and services.

MR. HERMES: One of the important policy shifts of the Act is a change in nomenclature; they finally started using the term career and technical education (CTE) instead of vocational education. During the whole reauthorization process, there was opposition to that change in terms, all the way up to the member level in Congress, despite the fact that by that time at least 49 states had already adopted the new terminology. All the stakeholder groups were pressing for the change because we felt it wasn't simply a matter of terminology but rather a more accurate representation of what CTE had evolved into. For example, the emphasis on "high skill, high demand occupations" is more reflective of what career and technical education is all about – the cutting edge training for high tech careers at both the secondary and postsecondary levels. Some other obvious areas of policy issues are increased accountability and moving towards more integrated coursework through the Programs of Study emphasis. Some may not be strict "policy shifts" but are very important parts of the legislation.

The real opportunity is that we now have federal legislation asking for coordination between CTE programs at the various educational levels. At the very least, it's a wake up call for areas where there isn't coordination in place already. It's more than a signal; it's a mandate from the federal level saying that this is an important part of Programs of Study.

UPDATE: Regarding the development of Programs of Study, we know that each state must adopt at least one, but many states are setting their goals much higher. What opportunities and challenges does the concept of Programs of Study present to community colleges?

MR. HERMES: Programs of Study, or something like it, have been going on most places already; many states are planning or have moved to go well beyond the one that is required. For community colleges, this presents the same sorts of opportunities and challenges that they've dealt with for some time; that is, how to interface most effectively with their counterparts at the secondary level, and Perkins IV demands more of an emphasis on connection with the 4-year institutions so we do a better job to help students who want to continue with their technical studies to the bachelors level and in some cases beyond that. The real opportunity is that we now have federal legislation asking for coordination

between CTE programs at the various educational levels. At the very least, it's a wake up call for areas where there isn't coordination in place already. It's more than a signal; it's a mandate from the federal level saying that this is an important part of Programs of Study. One of the biggest challenges you're going to see is in how to address the fairly large gap between what is produced at the secondary level and what the

expectations are at the postsecondary level. On the flip side of that, Perkins is on the leading edge in terms of looking at ways to narrow and eliminate the gap, so there's a real opportunity from the colleges' perspective to take the lead in their technical education areas. You don't yet see that issue addressed as directly in any other federal acts. Of course Congress is talking now about NCLB and the higher education act. But Perkins is leading the way in some of these important issues.

UPDATE: How can CTE get traction at the secondary level when the focus there is on meeting the mandates of NCLB; and some administrators do not necessarily look to CTE programming and instructional strategies as potential solutions to some NCLB goals and directives? Not meeting NCLB requirements

can lead to sanctions and that trumps the effort and resources to implement CTE's goals of integrated instruction, curriculum alignment, and improved transition between secondary and postsecondary education, especially if it is seen as an "either/or" situation.

MR. HERMES: That's an excellent question. One of the answers in terms of how this is going to get any traction is hopefully people on the secondary side will see an opportunity in what Perkins IV is demanding how CTE can be used as a tool towards those other ends, such as meeting their NCLB requirements. All the CTE groups are always pounding down the message that CTE is an excellent way to get kids in learning those core concepts and subjects through a much more applied learning methodology and integrated curriculum.

UPDATE: Speaking of curriculum integration, there are often gulfs between the CTE program areas at community colleges and the academic side of the house. What can be done to help faculty of both disciplines see the potential that blending their curricula in innovative ways can have to improve all curricula and positively impact student learning?

MR. HERMES: There is the hope from the folks who wrote this bill that Perkins IV implementation will initiate change at both secondary and postsecondary levels. We have other pressures at the postsecondary level, but we don't have some of those specific federal pressures like NCLB. Although we have certainly entered into an era of much greater scrutiny and the possibility of similar types of accountability for colleges and universities across the board, I don't think we're going to see anything that looks like NCLB at the postsecondary level. For that reason, these issues of integration at the postsecondary level will come more to the forefront.

UPDATE: Some local systems as well as some states face problems in tracking CTE student outcomes information and making sure it is accurate between secondary and postsecondary levels. The breakdown is found at both levels and for justifiable reasons. Were these issues raised when the accountability discussions were underway?

MR. HERMES: It became clear at the beginning that there was going to be an increased focus on accountability, born out of the fact that this administration had zeroed out funding in its budget for the Perkins program for a couple of years prior based on the official federal analysis that Perkins was rated ineffective. As far as concern about local and states' ability to track and provide accurate outcomes, yes, the concern was raised. I don't know that everyone anticipated all the particularities of what it was going to take to deal with some of the measures, and I am not as familiar with the secondary side about what kind of headaches the increased secondary technical attainment or NCLB measures will cause. Bottomline, it was just going to happen. Now that we are in the implementation phase, that amplifies things even further. The area where a lot of people, myself included, are taken a little bit by surprise is with how fast the US

Department of Education wants to move toward having those industry-recognized assessments in place: very quickly, when, in fact, the legislative language gives you the room to have a more measured transition from what we have now to the [additional measures]. I also think that they're discovering some of the complexities involved in that transition.

UPDATE: Perkins accountability measures require separate secondary and postsecondary performance indicators. While these indicators better represent the multiple student and program outcomes at both levels, at the postsecondary level, they'll require robust data systems that are able to identify CTE students and track their participation, retention, skill proficiencies, credentialing, and job placement. There is variability among CTE program areas in the ability to capture all of these measures and some might be very difficult to obtain with accuracy. What advice do you have for colleges that are currently struggling with this?

MR. HERMES: The AACC advocated for those separate postsecondary indicators – something that was better reflective of the multiple measures of success at the postsecondary level. The indicators themselves are not a key change from what they were before, but there are some important differences. I do know that a lot of colleges are struggling with the revised technical skill attainment measures, in terms of making the transition from a system where grades and GPAs were used to one that relies much more heavily on other types of industry recognized (external) assessments. The speed to which colleges move to those assessments has been, and will continue to be, a very large issue for postsecondary institutions in the transition of accountability. My only suggestion is for colleges to make every effort to get to a place where they can track and report outcomes that are reflective of what students should get out of their postsecondary experience, and that's 'all over the map.'

UPDATE: As you know, special populations as defined by the law include individuals with disabilities; individuals from economically disadvantaged families including foster children; individuals preparing for nontraditional fields; single parents, including single pregnant women; displaced homemakers, and individuals with limited English proficiency. These descriptors apply to many adults who seek the educational and support services offered at community colleges. Their transition to college presents additional challenges to those of traditional students who matriculate from high school. How can Perkins funded programs and services best address the needs of this increasing population of adult students?

MR. HERMES: My understanding is that a fair-sized chunk of the Perkins funds at the postsecondary level are already used for academic supportive services, and my experience in talking with various community college people in the programs around the country supports that. The new Act does not represent a big change on this front. However, one of the big issues you just mentioned that applies to Perkins special populations and is also in the Adult Education Act (that Congress still has to act

on) is the issue of transition from adult basic education to some sort of postsecondary program, often in CTE. Colleges can be creative in leveraging funding from not only Perkins and Adult Ed but from all applicable sources to put in place solid strategies to address some of these transition issues for this specific group of students.

UPDATE: Finally, do you have any interesting anecdotal comments about your experience working on this legislation?

MR. HERMES: Some people might be surprised at how much struggle there was to update the terminology [vocational education to career and technical education] in the bill. Most on the hill were perfectly in favor of it, but there was some conservative opposition to changing the terminology. Specifically, it was about using the word “career.” Part of it was a backlash to a previous program that had similar terminology. It was frustrating at the time for many of us, but we got it done! ♦

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State Secondary CTE Standards

by Marisa Castellano, Linda Harrison, and Sherrie Schneider

Many state education administrators are currently working to define secondary career and technical education (CTE) content standards that specify the knowledge and skills students are expected to master. This development effort, analogous to the academic standards movement of the 1990s, is a necessary first step to creating curriculum frameworks and assessments for structuring and assessing student learning. The report on which this excerpt is based explored (a) the progress and status of states in developing secondary CTE standards systems, and (b) whether and how high school teachers are using those standards in their CTE programs.

The report reviews the federal legislative history that has supported the development of standards as a part of school accountability, including the Goals 2000 Act of 1994, which funded the creation of industry standards, and the periodic reauthorizations of the Perkins legislation that funds CTE. All of these laws strengthened the emphasis on accountability by requiring states to measure the skills and competencies of CTE students and by encouraging the development of secondary CTE standards. The latest re-authorization, the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV), requires local education agencies to assess CTE and academic performance on state-developed indicators.

Research Questions and Method

There were two phases to the study. The goal of the first phase was to synthesize what was known about the secondary CTE standards system of each state. The following research questions guided this phase and were examined in each state. This excerpt will include findings from Questions 1, 3, 6, and 7.

1. Has the state developed a system of CTE standards?
2. How were the existing standards developed?
3. Are the CTE standards aligned with the state's postsecondary technical standards?
4. What is the approval process for new secondary CTE programs?
5. How are outdated CTE programs discontinued? What factors influence this decision (e.g., enrollment, labor market considerations)?
6. How does the state ensure that the established standards are reflected in practice?
7. What state funding is available for secondary CTE programs (aside from the federal Perkins money)?

We began by developing an interview protocol about secondary CTE standards systems that elicited the information

being sought by the study's funders, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (USDE/OVAE). We then conducted Web searches of state department of education or other state agency Web sites for information on each state's CTE standards system. After we had exhausted the online resources for a state, we contacted the state CTE director to set up an appointment for a telephone interview. Our search results were validated and supplemented during these interviews with state officials, which were designed to collect the information still missing for each state.

For the second phase of the project, the research team selected states with well-developed statewide CTE standards systems and interviewed state-selected high school CTE teachers from those states. These teachers were predominantly female with over 20 years of teaching experience, mostly in the business and family and consumer science program areas. The list of teacher focus group questions included the following, which are reported here. For more information, please see the [full report](#).

1. How are you using your state's CTE standards in your classroom teaching?
2. How did you learn to integrate the standards into your teaching (e.g., online/in-person technical assistance, consultant)?
3. What is not working regarding the standards?

Phase 1 Findings

The findings from this project provide a snapshot of the status of each state's secondary CTE standards system as of fall 2006. There was a great deal of variability in the design of state standards systems across states, with these differences explained by each state's unique philosophies, policies, and practices.

Of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, 30 reported that they had a statewide secondary CTE standards system. They are listed in Table 1 as Group A. Eleven states (GA, HI, ID, IL, ME, ND, NM, NV, RI, SD, VT) were either in the process of developing or had partially developed their CTE standards system. These states comprised Group B. Group C consisted of 8 states (AK, CO, DC, MD, MI, MN, MT, PA) that did not have a statewide CTE standards system, although they did have locally-developed CTE standards in many if not all localities. Two states did not participate in the interviews. This article will focus on the 30 Group A states [that](#) were farthest along in developing CTE standards. Readers can find additional information on Illinois in the [full report](#).

States with Ongoing Categorical CTE State Funding

All states receive federal Perkins funding supporting CTE. However, this funds only approximately 5% of most states' secondary CTE expenditures. Most CTE funding comes from state sources. Some states allocate funding to secondary CTE through what is called categorical (i.e., specifically targeted) funding, while other states provide more general K-12 education funding to local education agencies which then distribute the funds among many local programs including CTE. It can sometimes be difficult to determine whether a state's funding mechanism is categorical or not because states also provide one-time grants or supplements for CTE activities, thus providing targeted but inconsistent funds. We relied upon our state contacts to help us classify each state correctly.

Of the 30 states in Group A, 22 reported that they provided ongoing categorical state funding for secondary CTE programs (see Table 1). Only states with consistent, ongoing categorical funding were included in this count. No information was collected about the amount of state funding provided, but several officials in states with ongoing categorical funding opined that their CTE standards system had come about due to a steady source of funding. However, the full report notes that 9 of the 11 states in Group B also receive ongoing categorical state funding, yet they have not yet fully developed a CTE standards system. This finding suggests that ongoing categorical state funding can help a state develop its CTE standards system, but it is not a sufficient condition. Clearly, though, developing standards and a statewide system for their implementation requires investments of time and money.

Table 1
States with Complete or Nearly Complete Statewide Secondary CTE Standards Systems, Selected Summary

<i>Group A States</i>	<i>Ongoing Categorical State Funding Provided n = 22 of 30</i>	<i>Academic Standards Crosswalked to CTE n = 18 of 30</i>	<i>Standards Aligned with Postsecondary Technical Standards n = 10 of 30</i>	<i>Assessment Ensures Implementation of Standards n = 11 of 30</i>
Arkansas		√	√	
Arizona	√	√		
California		√		
Connecticut	√			√
Delaware		√	√	
Florida	√		√	
Iowa	√			
Indiana	√			
Kansas	√	√		
Kentucky		√		√
Louisiana	√	√	√	√
Massachusetts	√			√
Missouri	√	√		
Mississippi	√	√	√	√
North Carolina	√	√	√	√
Nebraska		√		
New Hampshire		√		
New York		√		√
Ohio	√	√	√	√
Oklahoma	√		√	√
Oregon				
South Carolina	√			
Tennessee	√			
Texas	√	√	√	
Utah	√		√	√
Virginia	√	√		
Washington	√	√		
Wisconsin	√	√		
West Virginia	√			√
Wyoming	√			

Note. The sample consisted of the 30 states in Group A, that is, those states that have complete or nearly complete statewide standards systems.

Alignment of Secondary Academic Standards with CTE Programs

Integrating specific state academic standards into CTE courses and coursework is called crosswalking. States identify the academic skills addressed in each CTE program area, and these skills become an explicit part of the curriculum. Thus, the purpose of crosswalking is to demonstrate the academic foundations of CTE. While some might argue that the time spent on academic skills takes away from the time needed to master the skills of the CTE program area, most CTE program areas do include important foundational academic skills. In the current climate of strong accountability for academic achievement, CTE programs that explicitly list their contribution to academic achievement may be more highly valued than similar ones that do not.

One example of crosswalking from Louisiana lists “learning and following safety and inspection procedures” as a CTE standard for welding students. When they do this, students are also “analyzing and evaluating complex texts with supportive explanations to generate connections to real life situations and other texts,” an academic standard in that state (See <http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/uploads/2909.pdf>). We found that 18 of the 30 states in Group A had crosswalked their academic standards to their CTE courses (see Table 1).

Alignment of Secondary CTE Standards System with Postsecondary Technical Standards

Twelve of the 30 states in Group A reported that they had a statewide postsecondary technical standards system in addition to their secondary standards system. Of these 12 states, 10 had aligned the two systems (see Table 1). The remaining two (KY, NE) both indicated that they were working toward this goal. Two other states (DE, UT) reported that they had aligned secondary CTE standards in some program areas with relevant baccalaureate programs as well. Finally, two states (FL, OH) have no distinction between secondary and postsecondary standards—they are simply all CTE standards.

Ensuring that the CTE Standards are Reflected in Practice

We asked our contacts how the state ensured that the standards were reflected in practice. The officials were allowed more than one response. The most common response across all state groups ($n = 19$) was that assessment was or was slated to be the primary means by which states would ensure that the standards indeed guided local practice. Table 1 shows the 11 states from group A that used assessment.

Of the total 19 states, 10 states were using assessments at the time of our data collection (CT, KY, LA, MA, MI, NC, NY, OH, UT, WV). These assessments varied widely, from end-of-program assessments (KY) to end-of-course assessments (UT), from online assessments (WV) to hands-on demonstrations

(NY), and from state-developed exams (UT) to state-specific vendor-developed exams (CT). The rest of the 19 states (DC, FL, HI, MD, ME, OK, PA, RI, VT) planned to include assessment as part of their standards system but had not done so at the time of the interview. Professional development and site visits were the next most frequently mentioned means of ensuring that the standards were implemented in practice.

As can be seen from the table, four states (LA, MS, NC, OH) appear to be the farthest along in their development of a CTE standards system that includes elements important to the implementation of the Perkins IV legislation: (a) ongoing categorical state CTE funding, (b) secondary academic and postsecondary technical standards integrated with secondary CTE standards and programs, and (c) the use of CTE technical assessment measures. Three other states came close to being in every column, but missed by one: Texas does not require CTE student assessments, and Oklahoma and Utah have not crosswalked their academic standards onto CTE.

Phase 2 Findings

For the second phase of the project, which explored the extent of teacher use of the standards, we interviewed state-selected teachers from four states with statewide standards systems: NE, OH, TX, and UT. Learning about teacher attitudes is important because the existence of CTE standards would be moot if teachers did not use them. Standards will be easier to implement if CTE teachers value them for holding teachers and students accountable.

Overall, teachers expressed satisfaction with the standards systems in their states. They believed that having CTE standards added rigor, credibility, and parity with academic courses. Rather than driving students away, these teachers believed that having CTE standards had attracted higher-performing students to their programs. Even in a state where use of the CTE standards is voluntary, such as Nebraska, teachers reported using the standards as a way to ensure that they are covering the relevant material.

Teachers had many different responses to how they learned to incorporate the standards into their teaching. The newer teachers, especially in Ohio, cited their pre-service certification programs. Other teachers, particularly in Nebraska and Utah, noted state or district-sponsored in-services and workshops. Informal sharing and networking at conferences were also cited by Nebraska teachers. Teachers from Texas and Utah noted the utility of web-based resources in incorporating standards into their curriculum.

We asked teachers what was not working with respect to the standards. Teachers in Nebraska and Texas were concerned that the standards were not being implemented consistently: in Nebraska due to the fact that the standards were voluntary and in Texas because of different levels of support for schools across the state.

In Ohio and Utah, teachers expressed a certain amount of stress over trying to cover all of the standards. Some felt that there were too many standards being required while schools were shortening class periods and increasing graduation requirements in other subjects, leaving CTE with less time in which to accomplish more. It is important to note in this regard that Ohio and Utah were the two states in Phase 2 that use student assessment as a means of ensuring standards implementation.

Given the skew in this teacher sample toward more veteran teachers, it is heartening to learn that most are eager for professional development and to do the work it takes to implement standards. As the accountability movement progresses, we can expect that new teachers will be trained in the use of CTE standards, but discovering that veteran teachers are also behind the effort is a positive finding.

Conclusions

We found that the development of state secondary CTE standards systems remains a work in progress. However, most states have completed or nearly-completed statewide standards systems. With respect to teacher use of the standards, the CTE teachers we spoke with welcomed CTE standards and the added credibility that the standards conferred upon their programs.

Our findings suggest that there are challenges ahead as states move to implement Perkins IV. For example, few states have crosswalked their academic standards onto CTE programs, and similarly small numbers of states use technical skill assessments to measure student technical proficiency gained from CTE coursetaking. We assume that the number of states responding to these mandates will grow, but incentives might be required in order to motivate states to move away from approaches undertaken before the details of Perkins IV were available.

A major conclusion of this study was that the current system of many different CTE standards systems across the states is highly inefficient. We believe that standardizing the CTE standards could be beneficial; however, the reality is that the states have invested time and money in developing their systems. Our recommendation for the early years of Perkins IV is for the federal government to monitor and help states collect valid and reliable data, examine those data, and then determine next steps. As some states are currently finding to be the case with academic subjects, voluntarily adopting common standards across states has benefits. Perhaps states will recognize that similar benefits may accrue if they align CTE standards across states as well. In short, many challenges remain in any effort to create a system of secondary CTE that allows for easy comparison of outcomes by state.

The information provided in this excerpt and the full report may be useful to federal and state government officials interested in improving CTE by implementing standards. The results can inform future federal evaluation activities, provide states with information about other states' efforts and strategies, and more fully describe the CTE standards landscape for researchers in the CTE field and beyond. ♦

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Implementing Perkins IV: A Snapshot of Illinois' Progress

by Jason Taylor and Debra Bragg

Introduction

Since the release of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006 (Perkins IV), Illinois' eligible Perkins agency, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), and their partner at the postsecondary level, the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), have been engaged in multiple activities to prepare for implementation of Perkins IV. Reflecting the Perkins IV requirement for increased coordination between secondary and postsecondary entities, ISBE and ICCB have approached planning and implementation as a collaborative effort, convening staff to discuss opportunities and identify effective practices. This article provides an overview of the various efforts that state agency staff and their partner, the Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) have engaged in to plan for successful implementation of Perkins IV.

State Coordination

In anticipation of changes inherent in Perkins IV, ISBE and ICCB commissioned OCCRL to facilitate the planning process and provide research and technical support. Beginning about one year ago, in spring 2007, in an effort to stimulate local participation and receive input from Perkins recipients, ISBE, ICCB, and OCCRL partnered to engage the field in five regional meetings that drew over 150 secondary and postsecondary participants from across the state. The regional meetings provided a forum for guided discussion related to five key areas: programs of study, instructional support, stakeholder collaboration, technical assistance, and assessment of technical skills attainment. In fall 2007, Debra Bragg, director of OCCRL, summarized feedback from the regional meetings and presented it to state staff and posted it on the OCCRL website. A copy of the summary is available at: http://occril.ed.uiuc.edu/Projects/perkins/files/Meeting1/3-Perkins_IV_Executive_Summary.pdf.

In addition to the regional meetings, ICCB, ISBE and OCCRL invited a representative group of secondary and postsecondary practitioners to serve as an initial advisory group for the programs of study (POS) element of Perkins. The advisory committee was charged with reviewing initial ideas for implementation of POS and contributing local perspectives to the state's federal Perkins IV implementation plan. Meeting twice in fall of 2007 (September and December), the advisory committee provided valuable feedback and recommendations to the state agencies.

In addition to the work of the advisory committee, ISBE and ICCB staff along with OCCRL staff have met on a regular basis to draft implementation strategies; share information gathered from other states; and draft and revise models, components, and terminology related to POS. This work is ongoing and will continue through the first several years of implementation of POS to ensure a successful roll-out of the new legislation at the state and local levels and to monitor progress and make needed adjustments.

Planning and Implementation

Since the fall of 2007, the state has made a number of vital decisions pertaining to the Perkins IV legislation and the implementation of POS including, but not limited to, the Perkins Title I and Title II, the career cluster model,¹ and the identification of Partnerships for College and Career Success. These three vital areas are instrumental to the future of ensuring quality education extending from the secondary to the postsecondary level throughout the state.

Perkins Title I & II: In the new Perkins IV legislation, states have the option to merge Tech Prep (Title II) funds with the Basic Grant (Title I) or keep funding streams separate.² Currently, nearly half of the states have indicated an intention to merge Titles I and II, and half have declined to do so (Meeder, 2008). Similar to Illinois, a few states are exploring options to maintain Tech Prep while considering possibilities for increased collaboration between secondary and postsecondary entities to support the further development of POS. On January 29, 2008, ISBE and ICCB released a joint statement with a decision to continue Title II funding through Fiscal Year 2009 in an effort to encourage collaborative work between the secondary and postsecondary levels and support the implementation of POS. Local leaders responsible for planning and conducting Tech Prep will rename consortia "Partnerships for College and Career Success," with Title II funding being directed toward the development, implementation, and assessment of POS and career pathways.

Career Clusters: Larry Warford, Project Director, College and Career Transition Initiative (CCTI), was the keynote speaker at the Fall 2007 Forum for Excellence and met with the Perkins

¹More information on the federally recognized career clusters is located at <http://www.careerclusters.org>

²The full Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Act of 2006 is located at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/sectech/leg/perkins/index.html>

IV POS Advisory Committee to explain the advantages of using the federally recognized, 16 career cluster model as an organizing tool for implementation of the state's POS initiative. Subsequent information has been provided to the advisory committee and state staff by OCCRL. According to the States Career Clusters website at <http://www.careerclusters.org/definitions.php>, Career clusters are "groupings of occupations/career specialties used as an organizing tool for curriculum design and instruction" (for more information, see States' Career Clusters, 2008). Within the 16 career clusters, occupations and career specialties are grouped into 81 career pathways that each share a common set of knowledge and skills. At a meeting in late March, both ISBE and ICCB agreed the state would adopt the 16 Career Cluster model and provide a cross-walk of the secondary career-technical education (CTE) areas administered by ISBE.

Partnership for College and Career Success (PCCS): To reflect emphases in Perkins IV that call for a coordinated effort and smooth transition for students among education levels, Partnerships for College and Career Success will engage in a number of self-reflective planning activities over the next several months. Among these activities is an assessment of CTE curriculum to identify career pathways and assess current level of implementation. Existing POS curriculum will be aligned and/or curriculum will be developed to include cluster level knowledge and skills as well as pathway level knowledge and skills. In early April 2008, the ICCB released the FY2009 grant guidelines charging Partnerships with addressing college and career success by providing students with a coordinated effort to achieve academic and technical competencies and foster smooth transitions from secondary to postsecondary education. As a part of this initiative, the state is planning to employ Pathway Development Teams (PDTs) to develop state-level career pathway models that will be disseminated to the field. Fundamentally, these career pathway models will be tasked with reducing remediation, increasing curriculum alignment, supporting dual credit, and improving student success, e.g., retention and educational credentialing as well as placement in related employment. These critical components are foundational to POS development required by the Perkins IV legislation.

In April 2008, the ICCB staff conducted three regional meetings to explain the new Partnerships for College and Career Success (PCCS) grant guidelines. Materials and professional development activities to support the new Perkins implementation strategies are being planned to aid local efforts to achieve rigorous and relevant educational programming that Illinois students deserve. ♦

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Perkins IV and Career Development: Considering Pathways for Students and their Parents

by Meryl Sussman

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006 (Perkins IV), which amended the previous Perkins Act, requires state plans to develop “programs of study” that combine career exploration with rigorous academics on the secondary level to prepare students for the postsecondary education required for most high demand, high skill careers available now and expected in the future (Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006 (Perkins IV), 2006). Within the Act, there are clear requirements that, as part of the state level activities, a state agency must provide support for career guidance and academic counseling activities that will “promote improved career and education decision making by students (and parents, as appropriate)” (Perkins IV, 2006, Sec. 118-c-1). These activities are required to help students and parents identify appropriate education and training needed for “high skill, high wage, or high demand occupations and non-traditional fields” (Perkins IV, 2006, Sec. 118-c-1). The act also identified the professional development of teachers, faculty, counselors and administrators as critical state level activities to assist parents and students “especially special populations, with career exploration, educational opportunities, educational financing, and exposure to high wage, or high demand occupations and non-traditional fields, including occupations and fields requiring a baccalaureate” (Perkins IV, 2006, Sec. 118-c-3).

The Illinois Career Development Task Force, in their February 2008 report, *Comprehensive Career Development for Illinois: Findings and Recommendations of the Illinois Career Development Task Force* (Williams, Bragg & Makela, 2008), recommends that a comprehensive career development system be created and deployed in schools statewide (See http://occril.ed.uiuc.edu/Projects/careerdev/files/CDTF_Final_Report.pdf). Career development includes programs, services, and resources that help individuals explore, choose, prepare for, and manage their careers. The Task Force believes it is critical to do this now because the high school dropout rate is 12%; further, 40% of college students do not complete their degrees. Illinois employers complain that new employees lack the critical workplace skills needed in the global marketplace.

The report details the benefits of career development programs for all students and expresses concern that some students do not have knowledgeable parents¹ to aid them in career planning and academic choices. Other researchers express the same concerns:

Middle school is a crucial stage at which students and their parents must begin to make [complex] choices....many parents do not have the necessary information to help their children make the important early choices that will help them prepare to fulfill their college dreams. Worse still, it is often the parents who most need the information and who find it difficult to obtain, leaving their children at risk of not properly preparing for college. (Cunningham, Erisman & Looney, 2007, p. 4)

Studies confirm that parental educational and career attainment is a determinant of how much information and support for career development and college going will be given to students. Students whose parents did not go to college (first generation students) and hold jobs that do not require higher order skills or training do not see the linkage between high school to a future defined career path that might include continued education or training (Cunningham, Erisman & Looney, 2007; Rothstein, 2004). Those parents are less confident about the classes their children should take in high school (Cunningham et al., 2007). The selection of appropriate high school courses is also dependent on the educational attainment of parents. Fifty-two percent of prospective first generation students took college preparatory courses in high school compared to 75.9% of students who had at least one parent with some college. In addition 14.8% of prospective first generation students said they had no idea if their parents wanted them to attend college compared with only 3.1% of group that had at least one parent with some college (Gibbons, Borders, Wiles, Stephan & Davis, 2006). “The best schools try to address the alienation of many lower-class parents from their children’s schooling, because if parents get more involved they can help raise their children’s expectations of themselves” (Rothstein, 2004, p. 31).

Studies have shown that parents see themselves as important participants in the career development of their adolescents (Bardick et al., 2005; Morrow, 1995). However, Downing and D’Andrea (1994) found that parents often felt insecure about how to help their children in the career development process. Regardless, children express great compatibility with the career values, goals, and plans parents have for their children.

Of all the people to whom youth can turn for help with making career plans, most look to their mothers. The findings apply across gender, to young men as well as young women; and they

¹The term parent is used for the adult with authority to make decisions on behalf of the minor child.

apply across race, to minority youth as well as majority-culture youth. The results underscore the importance of parents as allies and resources for career counselors in facilitating youth career development (Otto, 2000, p. 111).

Counselors however should be concerned about how the career experience of the parent might shape the child's exploration or aspiration to a range of career choices that the parent finds acceptable or understands. In a study of ninth grade students, researchers discovered that the majority of students had learned about careers from television or a parent (Gibbons et al., 2006). Both sources have the potential to limit or misinform the student whose career plan is being formed.

Many students and their parents lack accurate information about college. When surveyed, a majority of students and their parents overestimated college costs by more than 25% (Horn, Chen & Chapman, 2003). In a related survey of the parents of ninth graders, the same researchers found that few parents were actively helping their children investigate careers and the education needed to achieve them.

Involving – and educating – parents earlier is key. When school counselors educate parents directly, they also are influencing students indirectly as well. Programs that bring students and parents together may be particularly effective, especially if school counselors provide information and facilitate parent-student conversations about educational and career goals and encourage planning for next steps (e.g., college visits) (Gibbons et al., 2006, p. 176).

There are models for programs that deliberately build parental awareness of and involvement in career development activities and their benefits. When parents participate in the decision-making process for selecting courses, students choose more rigorous courses. During the Individualized Career Planning conferences held in middle school and again in high school in Tulsa, Oklahoma, parents learn about graduation requirements, career clusters, career assessment, and their own child's interests. "At these conferences, middle school parents are often surprised at their child's stated career preferences. For many families, this may be the first conversation about how to use student's interests and abilities when considering a career" (Newell, 2004, p. 60).

Kids to College (K2C) is another early intervention program involving middle school students and their parents. Offered since 1993 in more than seven states serving more than 41,000 students, K2C offers low-income middle school students opportunities to connect to staff and students from local colleges while learning about career options, study skills, and high school course choices. Students are encouraged to speak with their parents, teachers, and counselors. At the end of the program, participants and their parents visit the partner university or college. Pre- and post-tests of program participants demonstrate significant increases in knowledge about college going

and the appropriate preparation for it as well as increased career aspirations. In addition, the number of students indicating that they had spoken with their parents about high school choices three or more times during the school year increased 36% for Hispanic students and 43% for first-generation students (Cunningham, Erisman & Looney, 2007).

Findings such as these indicate that certain groups of students are at risk for poor academic and career planning due to the educational and socio-economic status of their parents. There are simply not enough counselors or resources to do the type of outreach needed to educate all the parents of all the children in the importance of making the correct academic choices for their middle schoolers. Eleven states have met these challenges by creating default diplomas. In this approach, all students are automatically enrolled in the state's rigorous course of study at ninth grade unless the parents, and often the principal, sign a waiver. Entrance to a lower curricular track is only permitted after a meeting with the student, parent or guardian, and a school official. "It is incumbent upon the school to articulate the disadvantages of opting out and the likely effects it will have on the student's choices and quality of life as an adult" (Achieve, 2007, p. 7). A more restrictive strategy, the mandatory strategy, has been adopted by several states. In this approach, there is no opt-out possible. In one state, for example, a student can opt-out only if he or she chooses to take a more rigorous course of study such as advanced placement courses or international baccalaureate courses (Achieve, 2007). "Both approaches [default and mandatory] are designed to do away with the type of tracking that has existed for a long time...and continues to leave many students unprepared for the world they enter after high school" (Achieve, 2007, p. 7) Perkins IV supports these more directive approaches with language that insists on academic rigor at the secondary school level to enable all students to succeed in college, including those whose career plans include CTE education and an associate degree followed by years of work before continued college education (Perkins IV, 2006, Sec. 118-c-3).

In contrast to the statewide systems described above, Illinois' secondary and postsecondary systems are decentralized and autonomous, giving them both local control and local responsibility, to create plans to prepare their students with the skills to meet the economic challenges of the future. Within these districts, as the work to develop career clusters and pathways unfolds, school officials and counselors, along with representative parent and community groups, need to create the approaches that give children more predictable access to rigorous academic and CTE curricula that will prepare them for college and careers. Given the wide variation in parental and student understanding of the impact that ninth grade career and academic decisions might have on postsecondary readiness, districts might consider approaches, such as those identified above. ♦

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Book Review: Levin, J. S. (2007). *Nontraditional Students and Community Colleges: The Conflict of Justice and Neoliberalism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan

by Collin Ruud

Nontraditional Students and Community Colleges: The Conflict of Justice and Neoliberalism by John S. Levin is a critical inspection of how community colleges are serving nontraditional students in the context of an increasingly competitive and global society. In this discussion, Levin identifies two prominent themes he considers as conflicting and incompatible within community colleges: neoliberalism and justice. Neoliberalism within the educational context is defined by Levin as operation within a globalized and competitive market in which corporations and economic benefit are of primary concern to institutions of higher education. Levin's definition of justice is drawn from John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*, in which "society must give more attention to those with fewer native assets and to those born into the less favorable social positions" (as cited in Levin, 2007, p. 46). In the educational context, justice is attained by providing necessary support and assistance to those who are most marginalized. In the book, Levin argues that most nontraditional students do not receive justice either by the education they receive or from community college policy. The exceptions are those students who are supported by individuals who provide the personal attention they need to achieve parity.

The basis of Levin's book is a qualitative study that took him to thirteen community colleges within nine states. Among the populations within the community colleges were a variety of nontraditional student types: minorities, students of low socioeconomic status, and adults. Levin gathered data via site visits and interviews with students, staff, administrators, and state officials. He makes extensive use of these interviews, providing numerous quotations to illustrate many of the individual characteristics and institutional policies represented within the book.

In the first two chapters, Levin sketches a brief overview of nontraditional students and the theoretical frameworks he employed to help understand this highly diverse population. The first chapter, outlining the definition of nontraditional students, includes three distinct frameworks: the trait framework, which classifies students by their different characteristics in order to determine their level of risk due to being nontraditional; the behavioral framework, which explores students qualitatively in order to better understand their part in the educational context; and the action framework, which examines students primarily through the policies and practices of those around the students, including faculty, staff, and administrators. For most of his analyses, Levin takes the approach of the action framework, noting that it will "identify both institutional and public policies that either thwart or enhance student access to and attainment in postsecondary education" (p. 39).

In the second chapter, Levin argues that the primary struggle for community colleges is between either providing justice to the students or thriving by a neoliberal ideology. According to Levin, "since the 1970s, the community college has assumed the role of the open-access, multipurpose, and socially democratizing institution. However, the institutions...[have] adopted a more business-like approach, pursuing revenues, working for increased productivity, and marketing [themselves] as a salvation for local and even state and national economies" (p. 57). In his view, by catering to the competitive and globalized ideologies emphasized by the federal and state governments, community colleges limit their abilities to provide justice to those students who are most marginalized within the educational context.

Chapters three through five provide in-depth exploration of the characteristics of nontraditional community college students. Chapter three presents the nontraditional students as having multiple identities. Compared to traditional students, many nontraditional students do not identify as closely with the institution that they attend, particularly in community colleges. Instead, they identify more closely among similar racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other groups. Levin notes that these differences between traditional and nontraditional students are evidenced by different goals and aspirations which necessitate more specific policies and practices for nontraditional students. Issues like technological deficiencies and noncredit enrollments further divide many of those marginalized students from many of the support services offered by community colleges.

The final three chapters of the book provide insight on the strategies and philosophies that community colleges can adopt in order to provide better support to nontraditional students. Challenging the claim that economic mobility is the primary advantage to a community college education, Levin instead argues that institutions focus on a more comprehensive "social mobility" (p. 138) that includes both academic attainment as well as cognitive and personal growth. Levin points out that even well-intentioned programs may unknowingly or unwillingly uphold neoliberal ideals that marginalize nontraditional students. At some level, according to Levin, the creation of justice instead relies on the acts of "autonomous agents" (p. 149). These actions are not associated with any formalized policies but instead are perpetuated by personal agendas and a concern for the common good. The disadvantage to relying on these actions is that they do not promote justice and equality for all community college students, especially nontraditional students. Levin also argues that community college concepts such as continuing education and lifelong learning perpetuate the marginalization

of students, as these types of courses are typically categorized as developmental and remedial, and likewise do not constitute credit-bearing work, what most assume is meant by a postsecondary education.

I find Levin's arguments are compelling. Community colleges are often pressured by local businesses and neoliberal-driven state and federal policies to provide an education that trains students in workforce-specific skills, which are often hard to transfer to new occupations or upper-level degree programs. The results of this pressure can be the limitation on opportunities for those individuals most marginalized within higher education. Even though Levin makes suggestions for improving the justice provided to nontraditional students, many of the potential solutions lack practical approaches to meeting these ends. Suggestions like improving federal and state financial support and providing universal access to all programs seem like good ways of providing justice to nontraditional students, but in the current economic context where institutions receive less state support, it seems unlikely that any of these solutions can be realized. This is not to say that the issues do not need to be addressed; rather, they should be approached in practical ways, starting with broad changes to policies and practices that better create support systems and avenues of access for marginalized students.

John S. Levin's *Nontraditional Students and Community Colleges* provides a solid foundation for further research. Levin's extensive use of interviews with students, administrators, and faculty provides practitioners with contextualized, anecdotal data about the specific needs of nontraditional students. Investigators will have a deeper understanding of the struggles of nontraditional students in community colleges, and the ways in which autonomous agents can foster the ideal of justice within these institutions. Levin implicitly suggests that community college administrators look to the ideals they hold the highest, assess whether those ideals are being upheld or supplanted by the current policies and practices, and adjust accordingly. Levin concludes that only by prioritizing justice can community colleges begin to assuage the economic divisions within society and provide a truly equal opportunity for marginalized students. ♦

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The Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) was established in 1989 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Our primary mission is to provide research, leadership, and service to community college leaders and assist in improving the quality of education in the Illinois community college system. Projects of this office are supported by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), and are coordinated with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), along with other state, federal, and private and not-for-profit organizations. The contents of our Briefs and bi-annual UPDATE newsletters do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the ICCB, OCCRL, or the University of Illinois. Comments or inquiries about our publications are welcome and should be directed to OCCRL@uiuc.edu. This issue and back issues of UPDATE can be found on the web at: <http://occr.ed.uiuc.edu>.

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