



Memorandum

To: Trump Transition Team
From: Kimberly Green, Executive Director, Advance CTE
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Date: November 23, 2016
Subject: A Vision for Career Technical Education (CTE) for a New Administration

Over the past several decades the American economy has undergone a dramatic series of transformations. Employers of all sizes are increasingly seeking individuals with specialized skills and career competencies in order to thrive in an ever-more-competitive market. Moreover, this new American economy is demanding higher levels of foundational skills from its workers, including creativity and innovation, the ability to think critically and solve complex problems, and collaborative work skills. These requirements cut across every occupation and industry sector and are now a prerequisite for worker success.

Put simply, jobs in our economy are changing and our education and training systems must keep pace. A commitment to high-quality Career and Technical Education (CTE) is key to meeting this challenge, one that is central to rebuilding the American economy and empowering the American worker. Our organizations represent leaders of CTE programs at the state and local level, as well as a broad cross-section of the wider CTE community.

The Association for Career and Technical Education is the nation's largest not-for-profit association committed to the advancement of education that prepares youth and adults for successful careers. ACTE represents the community of CTE professionals, including educators, administrators, researchers, guidance counselors and others at all levels of education. ACTE is committed to excellence in providing advocacy, public awareness and access to resources, professional development and leadership opportunities.

Advance CTE: State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work is the longest-standing national non-profit that represents State Directors and state leaders responsible for secondary, postsecondary and adult Career Technical Education (CTE) across all 50 states and U.S. territories. Established in 1920, Advance CTE supports visionary state leadership, cultivates best practices and speaks with a collective voice on national policy to promote academic and technical excellence that ensures a career-ready workforce.

The related issue briefs attached to this memorandum provide recommendations for leveraging the potential of CTE in three key areas: the primary federal investment in CTE (the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, commonly referred to as Perkins), funding needs for this program, and our postsecondary landscape. This policy area has historically been a bipartisan endeavor, with strong support from both parties, and we look forward to continuing this legacy over the next several years.

As your Administration engages with the CTE community in the coming years, we urge you to strongly consider these recommendations. We stand ready to engage with the transition team and incoming Administration officials to implement them. For additional information, please contact:

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In addition to the issue briefs attached further on, below is information about CTE more broadly, and its evolution over the past century of federal support. Over the next four years there is an incredible opportunity to reinvigorate our economy and provide students with invaluable CTE choices that will put them on a path to a better life and a successful career. As the Trump Administration seeks to promote economic growth and shared prosperity for our country, we encourage you to adequately support and effectively leverage our nation's CTE system to ensure the American dream becomes a reality for more of the nation's citizenry.

What is CTE?

Fundamentally, CTE equips students of *all* ages with the academic and technical skills, knowledge, and training needed to be successful in their careers and in life. The scope of CTE is broad and spans our nation's K-12 and postsecondary education systems, as well as its workforce development efforts. It is delivered to students along a continuum, spanning career exploration all the way to highly specialized and advanced technical training, and allows students to choose their own pathway. Delivered via the [Career Cluster Framework](#), CTE provides educational opportunity and preparation for all sectors and professions in the American economy.

CTE: Then and Now

In 2017, the CTE community will celebrate a century of federal investment in career education. This is the longest standing investment in education our nation has made and there is a reason this investment has withstood the test of time. Vocational education and now CTE has been vital to helping our nation grow and transform its economy from one focused on agriculture to a booming industrial and manufacturing economy and now to the modern, technologically driven economy of today. Vocational education helped supply our country with the workers vital to protect our nation during the World Wars. And it was Vocational Education that led the way in addressing national priorities like gender equity, public accountability and connecting secondary and postsecondary education. Simply put, CTE has been, and continues to be, vital to the history, strength and growth of our nation.

CTE was originally known as "vocational education." Its focus and purpose was different then than it is today. At its inception, vocational education was often limited to a subset of students who were deemed not bound for further postsecondary education. Tracking of students based on race, gender or other perceived capabilities was commonplace. During this time, vocational education was offered primarily in high school, and ended in a specific job, typically in the skilled trades.

However as our economy evolved, technology advanced and work became more complex, so too did vocational education. This evolution was further solidified with a new name for vocational education—Career and Technical Education (CTE). However, this was much more than a name change. The CTE of today provides opportunity and choice for all students rather than a just a few. It prepares learners for a broad range of careers, in areas such as healthcare, engineering, advanced

manufacturing, information technology and criminal justice, in addition to the skilled trades. Today's CTE integrates and aligns rigorous academics with technical coursework because this is what the modern economy demands. And importantly, today's CTE goes beyond the high school experience, preparing students for a variety of postsecondary education and training options that lead to credentials that make the most sense for them.

A Shared Vision for High-Quality CTE

In the fall of 2015 state, local and national leaders came together to think strategically about the future path forward for the CTE field. The outcome of this convening was the development of a [vision](#) for the future of CTE—one shared by stakeholders across the education, business, and industry communities. This vision encourages policymakers to more effectively support *high-quality* CTE in order to support all learners who choose to participate in CTE. This vision holds that CTE programs must be held to the highest standards of excellence, that learners must be empowered to choose meaningful education and careers, that all learning should be personalized and flexible and facilitated by experts, and finally, that our country's education and workforce development systems should all work together more cohesively to support student success. As the new Administration develops its economic agenda, including much-needed investments in the nation's aging infrastructure, we strongly recommend that these principles guide future policymaking in this area.

Demand for CTE

Effectively supporting and leveraging the nation's CTE system will be of the utmost importance over the next four years, particularly as the demand for CTE continues to grow. By the year 2020, nearly two-thirds of all jobs in the American economy will require some form of postsecondary education or training. Many of these jobs require education beyond high school, but not necessarily a four-year degree. Although these are commonly referred to as "middle skill" jobs, many require highly-advanced technical skills and credentials. By 2022, nearly half of all jobs will fall into this middle skill category. However, the supply of middle skilled workers often lags behind the demand for them, contributing to the often-cited skills gap and lower economic productivity.

CTE is well positioned to meet these new and changing demands. At present, the vast majority of high school students take a least one CTE course. According to recent data at the postsecondary level, over a million learners earned an associate degree and another 665,000 earned postsecondary credentials or certificates of some kind. However, more can be done to ensure that all students have the opportunity to pursue the careers and CTE programs of their choice, particularly as Congress considers the renewal of the Perkins Act.

CTE's Impact

One of the most enduring features of CTE is that it engages students in their learning. CTE provides the opportunity to contextualize what is taught in the classroom and grounds coursework in real-world experiences. When students see the value and relevancy of what they are learning, they are more engaged and are more likely to succeed in school and work.

These observations are borne out in the research—students concentrating in CTE graduate at higher rates than their peers, have higher rates of academic achievement, are more likely to go on to postsecondary education, and are more likely to persist and succeed while there.

As for a return-on-investment, many of these positive student outcomes have the potential to save taxpayers billions of dollars. For instance, secondary CTE's role in dropout reduction has an estimated \$186 billion lifetime return-on-investment for the U.S. economy. From an employment perspective,

CTE can provide the opportunity for students to earn greater salaries than their non-CTE peers and are CTE students are more likely to obtain postsecondary credentials—again something that is crucial for success in today’s economy.

CTE’s Role in Economic Development and Infrastructure

As the Trump Administration further develops its legislative agenda for the coming years, we encourage policymakers to consider the integral role CTE has in America’s continued economic development. For example, a qualified and skilled workforce will be a vital component to make much-needed investments in our nation’s infrastructure. As these initiatives are considered and continue to evolve, we urge the incoming Administration to consider the importance of a skilled workforce, supported by a robust CTE system, to future projects and investments in our country.

Sincerely,



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