NASDCTEc Board of Directors' Meeting

VISION PAPER

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Reflect, Transform, Lead: A New Vision for Career Technical Education

The United States has long held its leading economic status in the world. Propelled by innovation, the competitive character of capitalism, and the spirit of entrepreneurship, our nation thrived as a power house setting both the standards and pace for the world economy. On the heels of national fiscal crises, a flattening globe, and the challenges and opportunities brought on by technology, we must now take a hard look at how our workforce is prepared if the United States is to retain its leadership position in the dynamic global economy.

Reflect: An Evolution

In the early 1900s, vocational education emerged in response to the burgeoning industrial era. Designed to train individuals with job-specific skills, vocational education helped drive our nation's economic engine throughout the 20th century. Today, vocational education is called career technical education (CTE). To be clear - CTE is not a new label for the same system. While CTE is built upon the rich history and tradition of vocational education, is has adapted to meet the dynamic demands of the global economy. CTE programs at the secondary, postsecondary and adult levels prepare individuals for a wide range of careers such as health care/bio-medical, renewable energy, hospitality, nano-technology, engineering, logistics, law enforcement, and information technology. As such, CTE reflects the modern workplace. And since the majority of careers require a postsecondary credential, high quality CTE programs incorporate rigorous academic and technical standards, as well as critical workplace skills such as problem-solving, communication and teamwork, to ensure career and college success for its students.

Hence, CTE has a positive impact on student achievement and transitions. The programs help a student find their passion, bolster their confidence and empowers them to succeed. Because CTE demonstrates a positive return on investment, CTE is a trusted, long-standing partner with the employer community. And since CTE programs can be found in rural, suburban and urban communities in every state in our nation, CTE has the capacity and infrastructure to be the vehicle to prepare students of all ages to be successful in this ever-changing, world marketplace. While many CTE programs have evolved in the ways noted above, not all have. We have made much progress but we can and must go further. Excellence in all of our programs is essential.

Transform: A Reinvention

The forecasted needs of the 21st century, the pace of technological change, demographics, the challenges of student engagement and achievement, and growing global competition have created an urgency to evaluate the trajectory and role of CTE in the United States. In keeping with our leadership role and responsibility, the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium puts forth this bold vision intended to guide CTE's role in our nation's educational, workforce and economic advancement and success.

The five principles below collectively form our vision for CTE. The principles are interdependent and should not be considered in isolation. This vision charts a progressive, challenging agenda that seeks to ensure that CTE's contributions and potential are fully realized.

CTE is critical to ensuring that the United States leads in global competitiveness.

By meeting the current needs and anticipating the future demands of the economy, CTE is critical to our nation's economic success. CTE is a leader in building collaborative connections among education, economic development, and workforce development to ensure alignment of policies and program delivery. The programs are flexible in how and when they are delivered, and are innovative and quick to respond to employer needs. Standards incorporated in the programs are rigorous, blended academic and technical content, and internationally benchmarked. And students of all ages – youth to adult – who enroll in these programs are prepared as global citizens with an innovative and entrepreneurial spirit and who are boundless in their ideas and endeavors to stimulate positive economic change.

To accomplish this, we will:

- Develop a national common core of technical standards, built upon the National Career Cluster Knowledge and Skills Statements that are benchmarked internationally and supported by leaders from business, labor, education and government.
- Initiate federal policy that secures CTE's leadership role in leading alignment among education, economic development and workforce development, and increases the U.S. investment in CTE.
- Launch a marketing and communications campaign to showcase CTE's critical role in transforming the way education is delivered to all students, and to underscore the positive economic impact it provides for individuals and our nation.

CTE actively partners with employers to design and provide high-quality, dynamic programs.

CTE aligns its programmatic offerings to current, emerging and projected labor market needs. Therefore, partnership with business and industry is absolutely essential to our success. Drawing our curricula, standards and organizing principles from the workplace, employers are critical partners in the design and delivery of CTE programs.

To accomplish this, we will:

- Partner with business and industry organizations to develop and implement rigorous, internationally benchmarked CTE programs of study that are aligned to state, national and international economic demands and industry standards.
- Partner with business and industry organizations to ensure that the credentials earned by students enrolled in CTE programs are valued by the labor market and are, at a minimum, nationally portable.
- Close skills gaps by providing learners of all ages with access to the education and training necessary to be highly competitive in the labor market, including ongoing skill development of the existing workforce.

CTE prepares students to succeed in further education and careers.

The false dichotomy of preparation for work or college is no longer relevant. The global economy places a premium on skills acquisition and innovation. Therefore, all workers must be lifelong learners who continue to cultivate and grow their knowledge and skills through further education.* CTE programs prepare students to be successful by providing adaptable skills and knowledge, thereby ensuring flexibility to transition careers as interests change, opportunities emerge and the economy transforms. To document competency of these knowledge and skills, valid and reliable assessments that result in nationally recognized and portable credentials are necessary.

To accomplish this, we will:

- Support policies that require all students to have a personalized learning plan that clearly maps out a comprehensive strategy to achieve their education and career goals.
- Promote the acquisition of college and career ready standards, aligned to the national Career Cluster Essential Knowledge and Skills Statements**, for all students.
- Aspire to have CTE be performance-based, student-centered programs that are delivered without regard to time or place, to the extent feasible without diminishing the quality of the programs.
- Support the development of valid, reliable and rigorous national technical assessments, aligned to a national common core of technical standards, resulting in recognized and portable credentials.

CTE is delivered through comprehensive programs of study aligned to the national Career Clusters' framework.

To achieve our vision, ongoing transformation in the content and delivery of CTE programs is necessary. Programs of study*** aligned to the national Career Clusters framework**** are the means to accomplish this goal and should be the method of delivery of all of CTE. A rigorous and comprehensive program of study, delivered by qualified instructors, is a structured sequence of academic and CTE courses that leads to a postsecondary-level credential. In a program of study, the standards, curriculum, and assessments are aligned, thereby ensuring coordination and seamless delivery of instruction and transitions for students. Students are given opportunities to explore myriad career possibilities and have access to comprehensive career planning that empowers them to plan and prepare for a lifetime of career and educational choices. Relevant work-based learning opportunities, and leadership development offered through career technical student organizations (CTSOs), are incorporated into the program of study.

To accomplish this, we will:

- Convene and lead education, employers, labor and government to develop policy, resources and technical assistance to assist states with the design and implementation of programs of study as a standard approach to delivering high quality CTE.

- Support incentives for employers to provide work-based experiences and professional development opportunities for teachers and faculty, so they are aware of and can incorporate the latest industry standards and technologies into their programs.
- Encourage dual academic and technical certification of all teachers and faculty to support seamless and blended instruction.
- Support federal legislation that encourages rigorous, comprehensive programs of study as the delivery model for education.

CTE is a results-driven system that demonstrates a positive return on investment.

CTE embraces the critical importance of accountability and data-driven decisions. CTE's performance must be measured by appropriate indicators that accurately reflect programmatic outcomes. Data is used to drive decisions on resources and programs, thus ensuring programs are aligned to the economy's needs and resources are directed toward areas of highest need. Further, data demonstrates CTE's positive impact through return on investment measured by fiscal returns or savings for government and employers, favorable societal impact, career benefits for individuals and a positive impact on regional, state or national economies.

To accomplish this, we will:

- Use data to identify high quality, successful, scalable CTE practices and programs, target efforts and funds to those found effective and eliminate those that are ineffective.
- Support federal policies that make the collection of nationally comparable, valid and reliable data possible and efficient.
- Encourage longitudinal data systems to incorporate the data components necessary to support CTE accountability measures.
- Promote alignment of data requirements and accountability measures among federal education and workforce preparation programs.
- Develop a national return on investment model to demonstrate CTE's positive fiscal, societal, and economic impact.

Lead: A Call to Action

Our nation is at a critical juncture as competition in the global economy intensifies. We believe our nation's economic vitality hinges on our commitment to invest in and ensure the preparedness, efficiency, innovation, creativity and productivity of the U.S. workforce.

CTE has also reached a critical juncture. Success in this global economic environment demands a different type of workforce. If CTE is to have a role in successfully preparing this workforce, we must look at what and how we deliver our programs, and let go of what no longer works. We will strive to create only programs of excellence. We must be willing to take the bold steps necessary to jumpstart dramatic change in our nation's education and workforce preparation systems. The dichotomous silos of academics versus CTE must be eliminated and their supporting infrastructures must be re-imagined to meet the needs of the economy. As the lines of economies blur, so too must the lines that currently separate CTE and academic education.

As we look to the future, imagine an education and workforce system that rewards innovation, and synergistically and cohesively supports different learning styles, equally values different

interests and talents, nimbly adapts and responds to technology and workplace needs and prepares all students for career success through multiple pathways. This is our vision for the future of CTE. Bold leadership and actions will be necessary to realize this vision. We will provide the leadership to ensure our vision is achieved.

References

**The term "further education" encompasses all forms of postsecondary education including community and technical colleges, universities, military service, apprenticeship, licensure, and industry credentials/certification.*

*** Career Cluster Essential Knowledge and Skills Statements, which have been nationally validated, represent a comprehensive definition of what constitutes the core of initial college and career readiness across all 16 Career Clusters. The essential knowledge and skills are organized in the following categories: Technical skills; Academic foundations (minimally defined as a state's graduation requirements); Communications; Problem-solving and critical thinking; Information technology applications; Systems; Safety, health and environmental; Leadership and teamwork; Ethics and legal responsibilities; Employability and career development.*

Insert link: http://www.careerclusters.org/resources/pos_ks/Essential%20Statements%20-%20100608.pdf

**** A program of study is a comprehensive, structured approach for delivering academic and career technical education to prepare students for postsecondary education and career success. A framework has been developed in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education. This framework provides the expanded definition of a comprehensive program of study.*

***** The National Career Clusters model is a tool to create seamless transition from education to career in this era of changing workplace demands by connecting CTE to education, workforce preparation, and economic development.*
http://www.careerclusters.org/16clusters.cfm

The National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEc) was established in 1920 to represent the state and territory heads of secondary, postsecondary and adult career technical education (CTE) across the nation. NASDCTEc, through leadership, advocacy and partnerships, aims to support an innovative CTE system that prepares individuals to succeed in education and their careers, and poises the United States to flourish in a global, dynamic economy.

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