

Career Technical Education and Business Partners

Bridging Education and the Economy

National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEe)

Reflect, Transform, Lead:

A New Vision for Career Technical Education

Our vision's core principles are:

- ▶ CTE is critical to ensuring that the United States leads in global competitiveness.
- ▶ CTE actively partners with employers to design and provide high-quality, dynamic programs.
- ▶ CTE prepares students to succeed in further education and careers.
- ▶ CTE is delivered through comprehensive programs of study aligned to The National Career Clusters framework.
- ▶ CTE is a results-driven system that demonstrates a positive return on investment.

www.careertech.org

“As the pace of technological change increases, CTE programs must keep up with the ever-changing demands of the economy.”

While our economy is experiencing an overall downturn, there are industry sectors such as healthcare, manufacturing and energy that are growing. Unfortunately, growth in these sectors is hampered by jobs that go unfilled because there is a shortage of qualified, skilled workers. **Now more than ever alignment of our education, workforce and economic development systems is critical.** In 2009 the President's Council of Economic Advisors reported that, “participation in skills-training programs led to increased wages and earnings, raised the probability and consistency of employment and led to higher-quality jobs.”

In an effort to close these skills gaps, businesses are teaming up with high schools and community colleges to create rigorous career technical education (CTE) programs that respond to the needs of the labor market. **With the guidance and partnership of business and industry professionals, these programs ensure that students understand the realities of the workforce and** the economy and are prepared with college and career-ready skills needed to succeed.

A primary principle of NASDCTEe's vision for CTE includes the development of active partnerships with employers to design and provide high-quality, dynamic programs. CTE's partnership with the employer community is what makes programs unique from the rest of the educational enterprise. As the pace of technological change increases, CTE programs must keep up with the ever-changing demands of the economy. That means CTE must work with employers to ensure that programs provide students with experiences that are current and relevant to economic demands. Below are two exemplary education-employer partnerships.

NOVA Community College

Understanding the importance of skilled workers in a thriving industry, Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) set out to address the needs of its students and of the health care industry at a time when



CEO ROUNDTABLE

- Cox Communications
- Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce
- George Mason University
- Inova Health System
- Mitretek Systems, Inc.
- Northern Virginia Community College
- Northern Virginia Medical Affairs Council
- Northern Virginia Workforce Investment Board
- Virginia Hospital Center

there was a critical nursing shortage in the region. In 2003, NOVA created what is now known as the NoVaHealthFORCE model to help increase the number of qualified workers in the health care industry.

The model outlines three main goals: (1) increasing education capacity, (2) increasing the number of students enrolled in health care programs and (3) nurturing innovation. To further these goals, NOVA contracted with Pricewaterhouse Coopers in 2005 to conduct a study of the worker shortages in nursing and other health care fields in Northern Virginia, and to create an action plan in response to workforce needs. Data showed that, without intervention, **by 2020 there would be 17,651 allied health and nursing workforce vacancies in Northern Virginia alone.** Because health care jobs in Northern Virginia are growing at twice the national average, the need for skilled health care workers in that region is even more acute than in other areas.

To combat this projection, NOVA responded by partnering with employers in the healthcare industry as well as other educational institutions to create the CEO Roundtable. This group, which meets biannually, is a forum for public colleges and hospital representatives to work cooperatively and to align their goals to create comprehensive curriculum responsive to the needs of Northern Virginia hospitals.

An outcome of the CEO Roundtable is that NOVA began introducing courses such as radiation oncology and sonography to meet the specific needs of postsecondary students, as well as creating high school programs that offered secondary students dual-credit opportunities. These programs allow students to clearly identify career pathways in the health care industry that lead to occupations ranging from radiation to oncology.

Northern Virginia's health care industry has seen an increase in the caliber of education and number of students that graduate from NOVA programs. In 2006, the total number of two-year and four-year Resident Nurse (RN) graduates was 498. Since, that number has grown to a total of 679 RN graduates in 2010. Moreover, state and local funding have also seen an increase. Since 2006, the General Assembly has given over \$2.3 million to improve the allied health care industry. This number has been matched by local health care providers, who have given a total of \$2.4 million towards these initiatives.

Through this partnership, not only do Northern Virginia hospitals benefit but students, both secondary and postsecondary also benefit by obtaining nationally portable credentials such as their Resident Nurse Certification or Nursing Practitioners License that will increase their employment options.



“Our CEO believes in a quality education for all. The students of today are the workforce of tomorrow. If you do not have a strong workforce how are businesses going to survive?” said Marcie McDonald, member of the Education Leadership Team for State Farm Public Affairs.

State Farm Insurance

Traditionally, employer support for education has stemmed from an immediate or projected need for workers in their field. However, companies such as State Farm Insurance have taken a broader approach by supporting education programs that aim to cultivate a workforce beyond the insurance industry. “Our CEO believes in a quality education for all. The students of today are the workforce of tomorrow. If you do not have a strong workforce how are businesses going to survive?” said Marcie McDonald, member of the Education Leadership Team for State Farm Public Affairs.

About 15 years ago, State Farm and SkillsUSA formed a partnership to prepare students to be both college and career ready. Throughout this partnership, State Farm has supported SkillsUSA through a range of programs and events such as the SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference, an annual convention where students compete to be recognized as the best skilled within their specific industry. Also, State Farm employees have served on boards and helped provide funding for teachers to participate in professional development programs.

This year, State Farm worked with SkillsUSA to create an Innovation and Sustainability Grant which funds CTE programs in which students apply their skills to design a project, within their respective fields, that supports the “green” movement. The program capitalizes on the knowledge that students gain in the classroom while they also apply their technical skills to solving real- world problems.

In 2010, the inaugural year of the grant program, the Innovation and Sustainable Grant competition attracted over 100 applicants nationally. Of those applications 12 were selected as finalists-- 1 finalist representing each of State Farm’s 12 geographic coverage zones. All finalists received a \$10,000 grant to build their project and all went on to compete at the SkillsUSA National Championships where the top 3 projects were selected and awarded additional funding.

Career technical student organizations such as SkillsUSA are key avenues for business and industry to partner with CTE programs. State Farm’s support and dedication to ensuring the quality of the future workforce allows the company to establish a direct connection to the future workers in industries covered by their insurance policies, providing a mutually rewarding experience for the company and students.

The education-employer partnerships noted in this brief are just two of many that exist across the nation. There are ranges of ways employers and CTE can help improve and support programs:

- Create training facilities and/or providing equipment for schools and colleges so that students learn how to use the most up-to-date industry tools and techniques.
- Establish apprenticeships (including registered apprenticeships)
- Participate in advisory committees (perhaps joint secondary and postsecondary advisory committees)
- Develop industry standards/curriculum/assessments/certifications and partnering with education in their use
- Provide internships for students
- Provide externships for teachers/faculty
- Support career technical student organizations
- Serve as mentors, adjunct faculty for CTE classes/programs
- Be an advocate in support of CTE
- Work with counselors to raise awareness of career opportunities among students and parents

Business and industry play a vital role in the development of America's future workforce. **At a time when the need for rigorous education and skills training is imperative, education leaders, and businesses and industry are critical to creating programs and curricula that address the nation's needs.**

For more information on this brief, please contact Warren Zentz, Research and Policy Assistant, at the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium.
8484 Georgia Avenue Suite 320, Silver Spring, MD 20910 | 301-588-9630 |
www.careertech.org | wzentz@careertech.org

© 2010

i. <http://www.time.com/time/interactive/0,31813,1974550,00.html>
ii. <http://www.csmonitor.com/Business/new-economy/2010/0831/Job-training-Can-it-work-in-a-weak-economy>
Executive Office of the President Council of Economic Advisors. Preparing the Workers of Today for the Jobs of Tomorrow, 2009.