CTE Conversation with National Organizations

David Bond, Director, National Career Pathways Network

On Friday, April 1, more than 40 people representing about 25 national organizations were invited by the U.S. Department of Education to a “Career and Technical Education (CTE) Community Conversation.” A dozen of the organizations made three-minute oral presentations, and after table discussions, seven groups reported out.

Under Secretary of Education, Martha Kanter, and Assistant Secretary for the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, Brenda Dann-Messier, were present during all discussions and reports in order to gather national association’s views focused on effective approaches for and challenges facing CTE programs across the nation.

This newsletter provides statements from nine of the organizations represented at the “conversation.” The views of the following organizations are represented here: National Career Pathways Network, National Association of State Directors of Career and Technical Education Consortium, Association for Career and Technical Education, National Research Center for Career and Technical Education, Columbia University Teachers College’s Community College Research Center and National Center for Postsecondary Research, National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity, Correctional Education Association, State Higher Education Executive Officers, and National College Transition Network (did not make a presentation on April 1 but provided a statement for this newsletter).

It was refreshing to discover that many of the organizations had similar views on what needs to be done to improve the levels of academic and career success of traditional students and of adults who are returning for a second chance.

If anyone would like to contribute a statement (representing an individual, institution, company, agency, or organization), NCPN will be glad to print those in future newsletters. Send them to me in MS Word format at dbond@cord.org. Let’s keep the conversation going.
National Career Pathways Network

David Bond, Director, and Senior Vice President, Center for Occupational Research and Development (CORD)

Here is a very brief history of my organization’s commitment to improving career and technical education. More than 30 years ago CORD began promoting an applied, constructivist, contextual approach to teaching disadvantaged learners who are sometimes called the “Neglected Majority” or “Forgotten Half.” For many years, these students received little assistance in overcoming barriers to academic and career success. To focus on these students, CORD created the National Tech Prep Network 20 years ago to support the advancement of Tech Prep partnerships between and among educators and employers. More recently, we broadened our scope to be a proponent of all students choosing Career Pathways. In 2007, NTPN became NCPN—the National Career Pathways Network.

Here are some things NCPN believes about CTE challenges:

- We believe that school dropout rates are high because students are bored and don’t see the connection between what they are studying in school and their own interests.

- We believe there are many career-limited adults who do not have the education and skills necessary to become financially independent and contributing members of society. Many of those returning to education are overwhelmed and drop out.

- We believe that businesses are having trouble filling positions with qualified workers.

Here are some things we believe about solutions:

- We believe that learning in the context of a career pathway chosen by the student improves academic success as well as critical thinking, problem solving and soft skills essential in today’s workplace.

- We believe that curricula should be contextual and integrated (horizontally and vertically).

- We believe that education, led through business and education partnerships, is critical to the improved economic success of individuals, families, and the nation. We believe that employers must be deeply engaged for these partnerships to work.

- We believe counselors, teachers, and others who provide guidance to students, play a key role in student opportunities for success in education and careers.

- We believe that a successful second chance for adults must include a coordinated plan that addresses financial, logistical, and personal needs as well as academic, employability, and technical skills. This requires commitment on the part of many community stakeholders.

- We believe that everyone involved in Career Pathways, whether working with traditional students or adults, needs sustained professional development so that all the pieces fit together in a coordinated whole.

- We believe that data must be collected for program improvement and accountability.

We concur with most of what is in Harvard’s recent Pathways to Prosperity report. I hope that document will be used as a conversation starter around the country to involve more of the key individuals, institutions, companies and agencies in improving the educational and career opportunities for our citizens. Prosperity is a bandwagon that everyone should want to climb aboard.

For more information, contact the author at dbond@cord.org.
National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEc)

Kimberly A. Green, Executive Director

Good morning! Thank you Under Secretary Kanter and Assistant Secretary Dann Messier for convening us today to explore the future of career technical education.

CTE touches every corner of our nation—serving 15 million students a year. This breath and diversity is compelling in and of itself, but the data we have tells an even more compelling story:

- CTE concentrators are outperforming their peers on state reading and mathematics assessments;
- They are more likely to graduate high school;
- They are more likely to stay in postsecondary education or transfer to a 4 year degree program;
- And CTE demonstrates a positive return on investment

This growing body of evidence tells a clear story—CTE has a positive impact on educational and economic outcomes. And this evidence has resulted in newfound interest in the potential of CTE to serve more students.

On the heels of this interest, a year and a half ago our organization began a journey to dream big about the future. And in April 2010, all 50 states committed to a new vision for CTE. (http://www.careertech.org/show/new_vision).

The vision is anchored around 5 principles:
- Global competition
- Partnerships with employers
- College and career readiness
- Programs of study
- And data

These principles define our core beliefs, honor our past, and also chart our future.

Accompanying each principle are specific action steps designed to hold us accountable for progress toward achieving the vision. One such action step I’d like to note is work that we have already begun—to update and transform our national Career Cluster knowledge and skills statements into a national common technical core aligned to the academic common core. This work will be completed by June 2012.

We have begun our conversations about the future legislation with this vision in mind and asking the question “what is the appropriate federal role to ensure that CTE is a robust, innovative system that ensures students are college and career ready?”

We are just beginning our process and are thinking and being bold in our approach to crafting legislative priorities. We are not thinking about Perkins V but new CTE legislation. We know change is needed. Some tenets of the current legislation are solid and need to be preserved, while others need just clarification or refinement—and others needs to go away.

I want to address just two final points in more detail—key issues that for us have already risen to the top:

The first is Focused Purpose: As we think about the future, I think we need to be much more specific and intentional about what the purpose of the federal legislation? Since the inception of the federal investment we have continued to add additional allowable uses of funds, additional mandates and requirements but rarely have we taken any off the plate. While flexibility is often a good thing, too much flexibility can be a detriment and a deterrent for change. Our legislation needs more focus, more definition than it has now.
The second is programs of study. As evidenced by the fourth principle of our vision—we see programs of study as having a central role in future legislation. But to be honest, states are struggling with implementation. Not only is systems alignment challenging work, but current funding streams, accountability measures and plan requirements are often barriers.

In his remarks at the Pathways to Prosperity unveiling, the Secretary said that “instead of applying the RPOS framework to just a few CTE initiatives, we would like to see it applied to many more Perkins-funded CTE programs.”

We agree. If this is indeed the position of the US Department of Education, the RPOS framework needs to be made into formal policy guidance now. This could help tremendously as we move toward reauthorization. Until the framework is official policy guidance, the document serves more to confuse states than to motivate them. In closing, CTE stands at the crossroads of tremendous opportunity. We see such potential on the horizon to help retain and improve the competitiveness of our nation and to help more students find success. With such promise and need, it is hard to understand and honestly quite troubling that the President’s recent budget proposal did not prioritize CTE as the partner it could be in achieving so many of his and the Secretary’s goals.

I appreciate the opportunity to share these remarks and look forward to working with you craft progressive, bold legislation that can help more students be college and career ready.

For more information, contact the author at kgreen@careertech.org.

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**Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE)**

*Jan Bray, Executive Director*

Good morning! Thank you for gathering us here today to discuss the important role that career and technical education plays in ensuring that all students are prepared for further education and careers.

Earlier this year, Secretary Arne Duncan applauded CTE and said that it “has an enormous, if often overlooked impact on students, school systems, and our ability to prosper as a nation.” We couldn’t agree more.

However, CTE needs the full support of the Administration in order to reach its potential as a critical component of both our country’s education and economic systems. Proposed funding cuts would result in fewer opportunities for every student to access high-quality CTE opportunities.

The research on CTE is overwhelmingly positive, showing its impact on high school graduation rates, academic achievement and career success. In response to the changing labor market and the growth of programs like Tech Prep, programs of study and career pathways, no longer are CTE programs an ending point, but instead provide students with lifelong learning opportunities leading to jobs in high-skill, high-demand industries. For example, we know that CTE students graduate at higher rates than other students, and this research finding has borne out in the data submitted by states for Perkins accountability purposes. We also know that high school CTE students now go on to postsecondary education at almost the same rates as all other students, and CTE students earn more upon their eventual entry in the labor market.

We want to work with the department to expand and strengthen CTE programs. As we talk to our members around the country, several issues rise to the surface of those discussions.

One of those issues is the critical importance of a “system” of CTE that is built on the connection between secondary and postsecondary education.
This linkage is critical to student success and to providing an efficient, effective pathway for students through the educational system. There are many innovative ways of addressing the connection between secondary and postsecondary education, such as the use of consortia as Perkins eligible recipients in Minnesota, statewide articulation agreements through the CT2 program in Ohio, and strong dual enrollment programs in Florida.

While Programs of Study can provide an important building block for linking secondary and postsecondary programs, we know that this concept is still in the early stages of its implementation and that there is still confusion on the ground. We hope that more can be done to strengthen all of these opportunities in the future. At the same time, there is a strong recognition that many more students are entering postsecondary education later in their lives, and do not arrive directly from high school programs. Clear pathways for adults, as well as the flexibility and incentive to build these pathways, are also critical.

Another issue that has been raised by our members is the need to more carefully target the federal investment in CTE. There is a growing recognition that one piece of legislation cannot meet all of the education and economic development goals that we might have for our communities, and while essential to the future success of CTE, the Perkins Act can only be one piece of the equation. Focusing on key priorities within this legislation will be critical as we move toward the next reauthorization. This also points to the importance of strengthening aspects related to career readiness in other legislation, such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and Workforce Investment Act. For too long, CTE teachers have felt a tremendous burden in areas such as the integration of academics and relevant career skills, and the idea of providing relevance to students must be embraced across the educational system.

Finally, an issue that has gotten a great deal of attention lately is the CTE accountability system. While this system has shown tremendous growth in recent years, and demonstrates the value of CTE in many areas, we realize that many states are still struggling with collecting some of the information required. As we move forward, a key priority must be incorporating CTE elements into state longitudinal data systems and addressing privacy issues that restrict many areas from collecting robust information about students’ future employment. In addition, as we think about improving this system, there are a number of questions we must address: How can we ensure data is useful both for program improvement and for accountability purposes? Can we streamline current performance measures to focus on those areas most critical to student success and most specific to CTE programs? Are there more valid ways to define measures to ensure results are meaningful and demonstrate the impact of CTE programs?

As these issues unfold over the next few years, we hope to work with you to strengthen CTE and prepare more people for successful careers. Thank you for your time.

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National Research Center for Career & Technical Education, University of Louisville

James R. Stone III, Director

My comments will focus on four ideas each of which is presented as a brief point of discussion. Each of which requires considerably more text to fully articulate. They are these.

1) The necessary but not sufficient first condition to achieving successful transition from adolescence to adulthood is ensuring young people complete high school. Absent this, the rest of the conversation is moot. Regardless of whose data one accepts, we have an unconsciousable level of dropouts in this country. There is a solid body of research based evidence that demonstrates the “holding” power of CTE writ large (these are average effects from large scale, NCES and BLS data bases as well as longitudinal field based research).

2) High school must matter. High school today has evolved into the new middle school. That is, high school provides no intrinsic value except as preparation for the next level of education. As numerous reports have demonstrated, most notably Pathways to Prosperity from the Harvard Graduate School, a substantial percentage of young people will never participate in education beyond high school. Whether it is because of cost to the student, capacity of systems or capability of the high school graduate, more than half of adults in their later 20s are in the workforce without formal, higher education credentials. Paul Barton (ETS) spoke to this point quite eloquently a few years ago when he noted that high school is the last publicly funded opportunity to prepare young people for a successful adulthood.

3) The definition of college and career ready is not settled, it is contested territory. Most definitions assume that career ready and college ready are the same, and therefore have the same academic requirements (e.g., four years of math). While there is shared variance between the two constructs, they are not the same. Career ready mathematics, for example, is more than simply changing the word problems to include workplace examples. Rather career ready mathematics is the ability to use relevant mathematics to solve genuine workplace problems. It is the occupational expression of mathematics that defines career ready mathematics. One can make similar arguments for literacy skills as well. Beyond the occupational expression of academics, career ready includes what are often labeled employability skills (aka, soft skills) and technical skills, skills that have immediate application in the workplace. These latter two skills sets are arguably best developed in authentic work environments (Learning for Jobs, OECD 2010) or through Career Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs)—two largely unused, but valuable pedagogic opportunities.

4) Pay attention to research. It is an unfortunate reality that much public policy is developed without being informed by research. That said, there is a dearth of substantive research at the policy and practice level that might inform policy discussions. This argues for increased support for research that addresses how to improve the CTE classroom experiences of high school and postsecondary CTE students; how to make best use of work-based learning opportunities, and how to extend the benefits of CTSO participation to more students.

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Thank you for this opportunity to speak today. My name is Elisabeth Barnett and I am here representing both the Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Columbia University and the National Center for Postsecondary Research. The first is a research center focusing on a range of community college issues including career-technical education. The second is an IES-funded research center—comprised of CCRC, MDRC, and the University of Virginia, along with several professors—focusing on improving the transition to college for traditionally underserved students.

I wanted to make one point related to each of the four questions that are the focus of today’s meeting.

- **How can states and education institutions better prepare students for college and careers?**

  Perhaps the most important thing that we need to do as a community of educators is to give up the “either-or” perspective when we talk about CTE and so-called academic education. Essentially—every student needs both. Every student needs to be prepared for a career; also every student needs to have the tools to fully live their lives as citizens, artists, parents, consumers, and in all other roles. It is more productive to consider students as choosing a program of study that blends the two in different ways, in other words, let’s talk about placing all programs of study on a continuum, not labeling them one or the other—CTE or academic.

- **What actions need to be taken to further support the availability and effectiveness of career pathways for students?**

  At the secondary level: Reading and math skills are important, but teachers everywhere are concerned that emphasizing them is crowding out the portions of the curriculum that involve thinking, doing, and problem solving. Good CTE emphasizes these skills. Plus, they are more likely to ignite that spark in students that we call student engagement. Examples of secondary CTE programs that have been shown to improve student outcomes (based on high levels of evidence) are:

  - Career academies, small schools-within-schools, with a career focus. Researchers found that students who attended them had higher earnings over time than those who did not.
  
  - The Concurrent Courses Initiative—sequences of career-oriented dual enrollment courses offered in eight California high schools, in partnership with colleges. Dual enrollees were more likely than similar peers to graduate from high school in most sites. At the college-level, there was evidence of increased college GPAs and credit accumulation for CCI participants.

  At the postsecondary level: CTE programs that work well for students involve clearly structured course sequences, personal involvement with a mentor-type person in the career area (including connections with employers), opportunities to demonstrate mastery before moving on, and intrusive counseling/support. They also adapt to the needs of students who cannot attend full-time. Examples of postsecondary CTE programs that have been shown to improve student outcomes are:

    - I-Best in the state of Washington where students participate in courses that
blend CTE and academics. Students in this program were more likely to earn occupational certificates and persist to the second year of college as compared with other similar students (55% occupational certificate compared to 15% others; 78% persisted to second year compared to 61% others).

- What kinds of partnerships best support career pathways and how can effective relationships be brought to scale?

Let me just say—alignment, alignment, alignment. There are too many cases when programs of study are not aligned across levels. This includes internal alignment within colleges such as when non-credit courses are not aligned with credit courses in the same area of study. It also includes high school to college pathways (although Tech Prep and subsequent programs have improved the picture on this). It involves both curricular alignment and transfer of credits. In my view, if you have mastered the material in a college course, you should receive credit for it, even if you are a high school student or in a non-credit training program.

- What information (data) should be used to better track and improve student outcomes, particularly those related to college and career readiness?

In reference to data that can be used in tracking and improving student outcomes, perhaps the question is not so much which data, but which research designs. In other words, how can we make rigorous research on program impacts cheaper, easier, and doable by people without a Ph.D? Can we develop seriously cost-effective means for testing program interventions or policies without compromising high standards of rigor? Can we develop tools and templates that could be implemented by practitioners with, perhaps, minimal assistance from researchers? Can we make better use of existing data sets such as state UI data and state educational attainment data? I would suggest that this be a goal as we move forward.

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National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity

*Mimi Lufkin, Chief Executive Officer*

For the U.S. to remain globally competitive it must lead the world in innovation. Innovation requires diverse perspectives and divergent thinking—all fueled by a workforce where everyone is engaged. NAPE applauds the Administration’s efforts to engage the education community in staying focused on equity by including it as a priority in Educate to Innovate, Race to the Top and by strengthening the Office of Civil Rights enforcement and technical assistance to states and local education agencies.

Over the past twenty years, we have seen the achievement gap between boys and girls in math and science shrink and almost close—although when you include race and socio-economic class along with gender in this analysis the gaps reopen. However when you look at women’s participation rates in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) workplace you still see significant sex segregation. Young women are not translating their success in STEM in school to postsecondary transition and career entrance in high skill, high wage careers in STEM. This is the next “frontier” for gender equity in STEM.

Career and technical education (CTE) sits at this crossroad and can either lead this charge or get run...
over by it. CTE must be seen as central to educational systems reform at the national, state and local level and the issue of equity, access and success are integral to that effort. Reports such as Pathway to Prosperity, recently release by the Harvard Graduate School of Education; and Learning for Jobs, prepared by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) allude to this. Students need to understand the connection between what they learn in school and how it can be applied in a career—especially for girls in STEM.

Unfortunately, in this country, career and technical education still struggles with its traditional image and has a long way to go to remove the stereotypes that surround it. This is illustrated by the career cluster enrollment data available from state’s consolidated annual reports where women’s enrollment in 2009–10 at the postsecondary level for transportation, distribution and logistics was just 7%, 9% for architecture and construction, 11% for manufacturing and 24% for STEM. In contrast men’s enrollment in human services was only 15%, 18% for health science and 22% for education and training. Equity is not an issue just about women it is about everyone. We cannot afford to have half the population not engaged in any of these enterprises if we are going to keep our economy vital.

Over the last four years, we have been working with eleven states to implement the STEM Equity Pipeline project. This project, funded by the National Science Foundation, has been integrating gender equity into STEM teacher professional development and providing technical assistance to teams in pilot sites schools to implement an institutional change model focused on increasing the participation and completion of girls in STEM related programs of study. We are finding that when a school team of teachers, counselors and administrators work together to use their Perkins accountability data to quantify gaps in student performance, conduct action research to identify barriers to student success and then implement research-based strategies that are known to remove those barriers—that change can happen.

In some of these pilot sites we are seeing the numbers of girls more than triple in the identified nontraditional STEM programs.

It is commonly appreciated that you measure what you value. If we can agree that innovation will lead this country into a prosperous future then engaging a diverse workforce with new ideas and new perspectives is imperative—and we must measure our progress. Perkins is the only piece of federal legislation that does this and the career and technical education community has the opportunity to be the leaders in the endeavor to create optimal results from every student. There are four things we ask that you keep in mind as you prepare for the reauthorization of the Perkins Act:

1) Maintain the **accountability** measure for nontraditional career preparation and data disaggregation requirements—these data provide schools with information necessary for program improvement
2) Require **professional development** on research-based strategies for engaging special population students in career and technical education that is sustained and ongoing
3) Provide **technical assistance** to states and local education agencies on how to lead change in career and technical education that expands student’s opportunities to be economically self-sufficient and satisfied in their career choice.
4) Fund **research** that looks at the impact of gender, race and special population status on student success in career and technical education and career entry The four strategies, when focused on equity, will create innovative cutting edge programs that will create the workforce of the future.

_For more information, contact the author at mimilufkin@napequity.org._
Correctional Education Association

Stephen J. Steurer, Ph.D., Executive Director

The Correctional Education Association appreciates the inclusive and open approach of the US Department of Education. We are so grateful to be able to contribute to the conversation about career and technical education across the USA.

I represent the Correctional Education Association, the only national organization working exclusively for the educational development of incarcerated youth and adults.

Despite the fact that the Workforce and Investment Act has not yet been re-authorized, we have much appreciated the opportunity to participate in a serious and open dialog. Likewise, correctional education has always had a role in the nation’s career technology legislation. For correctional educators the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 is at least as important as the Workforce Investment Act. “Perkins II” mandated the creation of the “Office of Correctional Education” that is housed in the Office of Vocational and Adult Education. From the very beginning the office has provided an important opportunity for coordination of correctional education with related programs in USDOE and other federal departments. We in the field have found this very crucial to our professional identity and development.

Secretary Dann-Messier, your leadership has gone a long way to realize the potential of the “correctional education office” function in OVAE. In addition to your personal support for the correctional education office you assigned a member of your immediate staff to work largely on correctional education. Earlier this week we were very pleased to welcome Tarik Barrett who brought your message to correctional educators assembled at our annual CEA Leadership Forum in Annapolis. We were inspired to hear him recount the extensive work in correctional education under your leadership. In January Secretary Arne Duncan met at the Department of Justice with Attorney General Eric Holder and other secretaries to discuss how each department could contribute to the Administration’s prisoner reentry initiative. We were so proud to hear of that event that we have featured it on our CEA web site.

Correctional education encompasses many areas—adult education, career development, alternative education, special education, post secondary education, and more. Educators work in the nation’s prisons, jails and juvenile facilities as well as a community based settings for persons under criminal justice supervision. They coordinate with other programs to set the incarcerated and detained on a positive life course. A constant overriding focus in correctional education has always been preparation for employment success. You might say that we are not only in Career Development but also the real pioneers in serious “career change”. This is what characterizes us as “correctional” from others in the education profession.

Correctional education facilities typically offer academic and career/technical education with a focus on the GED. CEA is currently working very closely with the GED Testing Service in its mission to create a new GED that measures academic, career and post secondary readiness.

Strong correctional education programs in prisons include career preparation classes. CTE programs are frequently offered in coordination with community or technical colleges. Very early in my correctional career in Maryland I worked as a reading specialist emphasizing an integrated instructional approach to build academic and vocational success of students. We created a successful vocational preparation reading program. From this early experience I know that correctional schools can be centers of excellence and serve as demonstration laboratories for new and innovative
instructional practices. My immediate supervisor at that time was another reading specialist named John Linton. He had the vision to support my efforts at innovation and coordination between academic and vocational programs. For the past decade he has been “our man in Washington”, continuing to inspire and lead the field with new ideas. We appreciate how your leadership motivates and supports him and all of us in CEA.

Prisons education programs have demonstrated success in many areas—integrated academic and CTE instruction, programs of study with secondary and post secondary components, industry recognized credentialing, stackable credentials, learn work learn and apprenticeship models. We work side by side with prison industries and correctional management to encourage real world prison work assignments and “free venture programs” with private employers to provide jobs and opportunities for the future.

Today we look forward to continued inclusion in the “Perkins community” and to ongoing partnerships with OVAE to create more correctional education success stories. We know that correctional educators will not be forgotten in the reauthorization process by our friends at the Department of Education. Thank you for including us today. Please do not hesitate to call on CEA to provide more specific input and support your efforts to grow and strengthen career technology education for all Americans. Like you, we desire to improve career and technical skills as well as to increase the number of students in the “second chance” category.

For more information, contact the author at ssteurer@ceanational.org.

State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO)
Hans L’Orange, Vice President

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to address the community. I’m Hans L’Orange, Vice President at the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO). SHEEO is the nonprofit, national association of the chief executives of statewide governing boards and coordinating boards for postsecondary education. State higher education executives, by the very nature of their positions, focus on the development of all the educational and workforce capital for and within their states.

I’d like to begin with three core policy issues critical to framing any discussion on the direction of postsecondary education in the coming years.

First, both global economic competition and providing individual opportunities require that we expand postsecondary participation and successful completion across all levels.

Second, higher education needs to be accountable, and this means examining what higher education is accountable for and where accountability policies will be the most effective.

Third, the questions of rising costs and resource limitations mean that higher education is on an unsustainable price curve. We cannot expand participation while maintaining quality without cost-consciousness and cost-effectiveness.

In the midst of these three policy issues is the reality that postsecondary education encompasses a broad array of students and institutions. Collaboration between all sectors of education is necessary to meet our shared goals; it won’t happen by staying in our traditional silos. An appreciation of the inter-related nature of the various sectors and the need for shared understanding and shared data is critical.

There are several specific actions that the federal government, working in conjunction with states and institutions, can take to move this collaboration forward and enhance preparation, access and successful completion at all levels of postsecondary education.
Your leadership reinforces the need for and value of collaboration. Continuing to address the integrated nature of all of our educational opportunities in your words and your actions sends a powerful message to the community.

Data is one of the critical tools that enable this necessary collaboration. This has already been demonstrated by initiatives that link k-12 and postsecondary data as well as education and labor data linkages. The most recent round of SLDS grant requirements and the Department of Labor’s Workforce Data Quality Initiative have deliberately included postsecondary and labor representatives and their data. Continuing to broaden and encourage data alignment across all educational programs in future grant opportunities will provide tangible examples of collaboration and alignment—and hold these systems accountable; in the words of the SHEEO-convened National Committee on Accountability, this is a shared responsibility and we need examples of the value generated by these alignments.

Enabling these systems to demonstrate where educational practices are the most effective, where they need more attention and by highlighting completion metrics will further demonstrate the value of these data. That means linking educational data from multiple sectors with labor and workforce data; several states are doing this now and the results have been empowering. This raises the issue of the family educational right to privacy act (FERPA). No one is suggesting that an individual’s right to privacy be compromised but the excuses for denying data linkages frequently offered in the name of FERPA are red herrings and must be addressed. Guidelines that encourage the appropriate use of data between sectors and across traditional boundaries must be developed. I contend a social security number can be used and protected and is a data element necessary for system linking. However, it should not be used as a primary ID.

Alignment of data systems can be expanded in other ways. There are several federal data collection systems currently working in isolation. IPEDS collects data from all Title IV-eligible institution, the National Reporting System (NRS) reports on adult education programs and Perkins reporting gathers data on career and technical education. I suspect most in the data and research communities are very familiar with the system they use but are often unaware of the others. Yet they all collect and analyze data on students, sometimes the same students. Finding ways to link these multiple education records, and link them to workforce records and census records would generate extremely valuable information on completion and mobility. Data standardization is just the first step in this alignment. I’m not naïve enough to think it will be easy but researchers are starting to talk about how this can be accomplished and their efforts need to be encouraged and sanctioned.

Finally, continuing to encourage state coordination between WIA providers and state education systems is critical. This is the nexus of the career/technical, educational and workforce sectors and is one of the best places to demonstrate our commitment to shared goals and practices at the federal and state levels.

Thank you for this time today. We all have a tendency to work within our own spheres and I applaud your efforts to bring the larger community together to discuss ways in which we can collaboratively move forward.

For more information, contact the author at hlorange@sheeo.org.
National College Transition Network, World Education, Inc.

Ellen Hewett, Director

The mission of the National College Transition Network (NCTN) is to strengthen policy and practice related to college and career readiness for adult learners that lead to jobs with family sustaining wages. Our work with adult education programs, professional development providers, and policymakers informs our understanding and practice. In addition, of particular significance to the recommendations listed here are lessons from three recent projects: Transitions to College and Careers (TCC) project; the National Career Awareness (NCA) project; and Postsecondary Success of Young Adults: State Policies and Practices study.

The goal of the TCC (2009-2010) project with six sites spread over five states was to develop and pilot a replicable transition program model that blends face-to-face and online learning. The career-specific focus was on health careers that have a pathway to technical and professional education and to jobs that pay family-sustaining wages. Each site partnered with one or more postsecondary institutions as well as employers. The project exceeded its performance goals with 380 students served of whom 50% have enrolled in college, and another 20% have plans to enroll.

The National Career Awareness project (2011) is managed by the LINCS Regional Resource Center 1 and the National College Transition Network (NCTN), with funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education. The overall goal of the project is to increase and improve adult learners’ career awareness and planning throughout all levels of the ESOL, ABE, and Adult Secondary Education spectrum by helping adult education program staff incorporate career awareness and planning into their instruction and counseling activities. Currently, eight state teams are participating in the first round of the project, and another seven teams will be selected for a second round. The high level of interest from the field in the project indicates that adult educators are eager for tools, resources, and training to better prepare students for college and careers.

In 2010, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation engaged the NCTN to profile 17 states with a focus on identifying adult education policy levers and practices that increase the number of young adults who reach a postsecondary credential. This study, Postsecondary Success of Young Adults: State Policies and Practices, describes and analyzes efforts that are relevant to adult learners of all ages in programs receiving WIA Title II funding. A key finding was that the adult education field is poised to benefit from an infusion of support for system level reform.

The recommendations that follow are based on the belief that effective career pathways policies and practices require the alignment of adult education, postsecondary education, and workforce and economic development activities.

**Build the capacity of program staff to implement this systems change agenda.** Approximately 80% of adult educators nationwide work part-time, typically without many benefits, and receive most of their adult education training while in-service. The implementation of effective college and career readiness services requires ongoing professional development for teachers, counselors, and administrators. Intensive professional development is needed to both build capacity and inform the field. While adult educators need to learn more about college and career readiness, many pedagogical strategies used in adult education are ones that postsecondary and workforce educators can learn from, such as competency-based learning, differentiated instruction, and intentional use of multiple persistence strategies.
Advocate for increased awareness and support for adult education system among college and workforce leaders and policymakers. Adult education must be a full partner in federal, state and local policy initiatives, boards and workgroups that spearhead reforms in employment and education. Such policy initiatives need to take into account the key features that shape the adult education system (i.e., prevailing standards, funding, staff capacity, and accountability structures).

Identify and scale effective delivery models. These models need to focus on system alignment and use a combination of acceleration strategies (i.e., dual enrollment, contextualized learning, modularization, integration of college and career readiness instruction with GED or adult diploma programs) and interactive technology that engages learners. Also, these models must include career planning and wraparound support for students on campus and in the community.

Define college readiness as more than academic readiness and use this definition to inform practice. This definition needs to recognize the complex career and personal readiness needed for adults to be successful practice. Operationalizing a more nuanced definition (beyond level of placement in college) is challenging. Emerging student-level benchmarks of success, such as those developed in Washington State, could be used at the national level.

Reformulate the National Reporting System to track goal attainment beyond fiscal years. This tracking needs to reflect key milestones in adults’ readiness and enrollment in postsecondary education and job attainment so that adults who have received college and career services in adult education can be disaggregated from other students.

As a full partner in system reform across the education spectrum, adult education stands to deliver its part in the college completion process for the benefit of tens of thousands of young and older adults who currently fall through the cracks of that process.

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**Connections**

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*Connections* is published by the National Career Pathways Network, an organization of educators and employers dedicated to the advancement of Career Pathways, Tech Prep, and other CTE initiatives. NCPN assists its members in planning, implementing, evaluating, and improving workforce education programs. NCPN was founded by CORD, a national nonprofit organization that has been leading change in education for over twenty years.

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**Save the date!**

The 2011 conference will be held October 12–14 at the Orlando (Florida) World Center Marriott. Visit ncpn.info often for the latest information.