



Transition Team Info

Career and technical education is directly tied to the nation's economic health and security and is an answer to many of the urgent education and workforce problems our country is facing – including high dropout rates, low educational achievement and a lack of skilled workers in key industry areas. However, under the previous Administration, CTE was often overlooked as part of the solution, and in many cases even attacked through proposed funding cuts.

ACTE recommends that the Obama Administration use its influence and bully pulpit to highlight, discuss and promote the value of career and technical education. CTE is a critical part of the education and workforce development systems and ACTE hopes that efforts to enhance and expand these opportunities for today's students will be promoted by the Obama Administration.

OVAE Personnel

Key to these efforts will be strong leadership within the Department of Education, and especially within OVAE, that values CTE. In the past, OVAE leaders have not appeared to be in a position to affect overall Department policy, and this has minimized the role of CTE in a variety of efforts.

The new Assistant Secretary of OVAE needs to be someone that has a solid knowledge base related to CTE and who comes from a background familiar with how CTE programs operate on the state or local level. Having someone "from the field" will go a long way toward finding solutions to current challenges facing CTE and will reduce the amount of time needed to get that person up to speed on critical issues. This person should also be someone who has the respect and ear of those appointed to higher positions within both the Departments of Education and Labor, so that the CTE voice can be heard in important internal policy discussions.

Perkins Implementation

ACTE has been generally pleased with the overall implementation of the Perkins Act, but a number of challenges remain. Early in the process, guidance was often slow to emerge from the Department making it difficult for states to move forward. There are still some areas where more clarity in guidance would be useful as states implement the five year plans.

There are also challenges to data collecting and reporting under the current guidelines and Consolidated Annual Report (CAR). For example, in many states the use of Social Security numbers is not allowed. This makes tracking students for placement measures extremely difficult and inefficient. The Department of Education should look for ways to facilitate the use of Social Security numbers in a way that maintains student privacy but allows for better tracking of program results.

One of the biggest challenges for many states in the new law is the requirement to more rigorously measure students' technical skill attainment. The discussions facilitated by OVAE around a national clearinghouse and item bank have been useful and OVAE should continue to take a leadership role in helping states to address this expensive and time-consuming issue.

To address some of these issues, it is important that initiatives such as the Next Steps Working Group, which meets monthly to talk through accountability concerns, the Data Quality Institutes, and quarterly calls with state directors, continue. These efforts have provided the most consistent source of information on Perkins implementation and have been some of the most positive activities of OVAE over the last few years.

Funding

It is crucial to the success of career and technical education that adequate funding is invested into the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. In the past years, funding for Perkins has been on a steady decline. With budget constraints and the proposals to eliminate funding from the Bush Administration, it has been an uphill battle to sustain funds.



The last substantial increase in funding for the Perkins Act occurred in FY 2002. Since that time, funds have actually decreased by \$42 million. It is the Association for Career and Technical Education's (ACTE) hope that the incoming Administration would be supportive of the funding for Perkins and will encourage increases so the program can keep up with inflation and increased enrollments in CTE, especially considering the programs potential to improve workforce shortages that are tied to the nation's economic health.

Related to funding, the PART tool currently being used by OMB to evaluate programs is not appropriate for Perkins and CTE, and its findings are not consistent with other research in the field. ACTE would like to work with the Department to determine a more appropriate approach to program evaluation and accountability.

National Programs

The activities funded under the "National Programs" section of the Perkins law are critical to the field and to ACTE members. Often, the research and information produced by the National Center, such as the recent Math-in-CTE study, is directly relevant to local teachers and makes an important impact on classroom practice. Other activities funded through the national programs, such as technical assistance for states and grants to develop programs of study provide seed money to grow initiatives that improve the overall quality of CTE around the country.

However, in recent years there has often been a "siphoning off" of resources for these activities as funds have been redirected to activities that do not directly benefit CTE programs. Also, additional projects continue to be placed in the National Research Center for CTE. Often, these are worthy activities but this new work is stressing the capacity of ongoing work of the Research Center. Additional sources of funding would help address this issue.

Other Challenges and Opportunities

- OVAE needs to continue technical assistance and support activities for local practitioners, including through the states but also helping to fill the "rift" that sometimes exists between the federal government and local understanding of federal policies (ACTE can help to do this).
- Two of the biggest challenges facing the CTE field are filling teacher pipeline needs, while simultaneously addressing teacher quality issues/perceptions and providing up-to-date equipment and curriculum, especially for new and emerging professions such as in the energy sustainability field. Any efforts on behalf of OVAE to help address these issues would be appreciated.
- Related to the bully pulpit issue, more needs to be done to connect various federal laws such as Perkins and No Child Left Behind/ESEA. Discussions about NCLB/ESEA from the Department have not focused enough on CTE activities and how to leverage this work to address school improvement including issues such as student engagement and the dropout issue, secondary-postsecondary transitions, American competitiveness, etc.
- CTE is one of the few federal programs that bridges both secondary and postsecondary education. Efforts already underway to strengthen this linkage should be continued and expanded upon to ensure a more seamless education system for students.
- The time it takes to get clearance and approval of documents and activities has been a Department-wide issue of concern.