

REVIEW

Investigating Applied Baccalaureate Degree Pathways in Technician Education

The National Science Foundation's Advanced Technological Education (NSF-ATE) program awarded funding to the Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to support documentation and evaluation of NSF-ATE's impact on the development of new and emerging Applied Baccalaureate degree programs in STEM fields. "Investigating Applied Baccalaureate Degree Pathways in Technician Education" is an overview of the first phase of research, providing insights into baccalaureate degree pathways in STEM fields including AB degree pathways that prepare technicians and technologists¹. As part of the summative evaluation of this project, external reviewers offered the following comments.

Reviewers described this report as "*a very useful analysis*" and as addressing "*a very important topic*":

"These pathways are going to be a very important means by which our society both fills its need for STEM personnel and provides educational opportunity for less advantaged students. Despite the importance of these pathways, we do not understand very well what forms they take. This report makes a major contribution on this front by carefully and systematically describing and categorizing these pathways, providing a wealth of data."

The organization of the report was noted as "*very sound, efficient and easy for the reader to follow*", "*well organized, with a clear roadmap and good use of headings and a logical flow of topics*", and "*flows well and is logical*". Additionally, reviewers believed that the methods were "*quite appropriate to the data and the objectives*" and "*well done*".

Comments regarding the conclusion were that it is "*well supported by the data and analysis and they are stated in an exceptionally clear, focused, and organized manner*." and that "*the report carefully lays out its conclusions and they are nicely backed up by its data*."

Questions and comments from reviewers for the authors included the following:

- The report noted that of the 95 programs examined, clear information was available on the website in only 54% of the cases. What are the reasons for this high rate of omission? To what extent is it deliberate, that programs are choosing to keep their details to themselves, perhaps because of the "political factors" and legitimacy concerns also discussed in the report?
- The report raises the question of how students perceive the similarities and differences between terminal and transfer degree programs, which are often surprisingly similar. This is a very interesting point that definitely deserves following up in future studies and deserves some elaboration here.
- The report notes in passing that students often transfer without a degree. What implications does this have for program coherence and outcomes?

¹ This report is available at http://occrll.illinois.edu/files/Projects/nsf_ab/NSF-AB-TechReport-2012.pdf