

Executive Summary

Regional Perkins IV Transition Meetings Spring 2007

Prepared by Debra D. Bragg, Ph.D.

To facilitate the implementation of new federal legislation on career-technical education (CTE), the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) sought input from K-12 and postsecondary education professionals from throughout the state. The Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) was commissioned to support this endeavor through the planning and facilitation of regional meetings. Besides addressing the goal of collecting input on ways to align CTE with the new federal legislation, the regional meetings were tasked with two additional objectives: a) to seize the opportunity to envision and formulate plans for systemic change, restructuring and improving practice, and b) to identify policy changes needed to enhance CTE programs statewide.

Between late March and mid May, five regional meetings were held in the following locations: Lincoln Land Community College, Springfield; Parkland College, Champaign; Chicago Public Schools, Chicago; Waubensee Community College, Sugar Grove; and Rend Lake College, Ina. Over 150 participants representing secondary and postsecondary education were involved. Along with staff of OCCRL, representatives of the ISBE and ICCB were active participants in all sessions, including assisting in delivering the invitations, coordinating the meetings, compiling materials and taking notes, and assisting with facilitation of large and small group discussions happening during the meetings. Following each meeting, notes were transcribed and data were analyzed by OCCRL staff. Information was compiled from all five meetings to create this executive summary report.

Based on results of all regional meetings, major discussion points offered by participants to five key questions follow:

Programs of Study: *How might Illinois best establish, encourage, and grow the legislation's requirement of programs of study, from secondary to post-secondary, including transition to baccalaureate degrees?*

- Emphasize career pathways that use curriculum alignment, and clarify what career pathways mean and how they work for students and their parents.
- Expand dual credit to insure that more students throughout the state have opportunities to benefit.
- Enhance articulation agreements, including implementing Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI)-type agreements with four-year colleges.
- Enhance secondary and postsecondary collaboration; Recognize that collaboration is instrumental to implementation of programs of study.
- Award funding in a manner that balances state leadership with local autonomy.
- Pay attention to the needs of special populations, including providing adequate funding.
- Decide whether to maintain separate funding or integrate Tech Prep (the meetings produced rationale presented on both sides of this issue).
- Insure that programs of study allow for adequate tracking of the progression of students from one level of education to another; Be sure data collection follows students and documents their transitions, retention, credentialing and other outcomes required by Perkins IV and essential to quality programming.

Instructional Support: *How can Illinois best attract, train, encourage and support CTE instructors, while focusing on the need for innovative instruction and tools?*

- Investigate and pursue suitable alternative delivery methods (e.g., online, summer internships, work-based learning).

- Implement CTE and academic integration and support professional development that emphasizes curriculum integration and alignment.
- Provide incentives to professionals who implement innovative practices, and ensure funding of innovative programs.
- Support the development, implementation and evaluation of model/exemplary CTE programs so that lessons learned can be disseminated to improve CTE programs throughout the state.
- Renew the VIP / AIP program – allocate funding and encourage involvement.
- Pursue provisional certification options.
- Enhance secondary and postsecondary collaboration to enhance instructional support.

Stakeholder Collaboration: *What are best practices of collaboration across educational, industry, and family communities?*

- Insure that advisory committees are used to support high quality CTE programs; consider using joint advisory committees that serve the K-12 and postsecondary levels.
- Enhance business partnerships so that employers are energized and active supporters of CTE.
- Enhance marketing of CTE and enhance the image of CTE statewide.
- Use data collection to document and share best practices throughout the state.
- Enhance secondary and postsecondary collaboration to support stakeholder involvement.

Technical Assistance: *How can state educational agencies, within present funding expectations, best provide technical assistance to the CTE field?*

- Insure advisory committees are active and substantive contributors to CTE programs.
- Draw more systematically and extensively on expertise and resources available from business and industry.
- Utilize funding to support innovative pilot projects that can generate lessons to enhance programs and practices statewide.
- Enhance secondary and postsecondary collaboration to support technical assistance activities.

Assessment of Technical Skill Attainment: *The new Perkins legislation places additional emphasis on formal assessments of technical skill attainment. What advice can you offer about how Illinois might best proceed in developing or adopting approaches to measuring technical skill attainment?*

- Align curriculum with assessment, including clarifying what is meant by skills vs. orientation course levels.
- Enhance data collection and data sharing so that students can be tracked from one level of education to another, from education to the workplace, and so forth; Use adequate tracking of students and appropriate measures for Tech Prep, in particular.
- Emphasize and support curriculum and assessments that are tied to industry-recognized credentials.
- Consider the use of Work Keys (ACT) as another piece of the state’s comprehensive plan for Perkins IV assessment of student outcomes.
- Balance state leadership with local autonomy in ways that facilitate quality programs and valid and reliable assessments.