



Higher Education Act



The importance of workers having some type of postsecondary education has grown as demand for a skilled workforce has increased. Career and technical education (CTE) is a major and long-standing enterprise within the U.S. higher education system that continually evolves to meet the needs of today's students and employers. In fact, many students obtaining in-demand CTE postsecondary credentials are outearning college graduates with non-CTE credentials.

Building on the existing strengths and resources of CTE today, the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) presents the following recommendations for the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA).

Priority 1: Reduce Barriers to Short-Term Higher Education

Continual development of a skilled workforce is critical to American competitiveness, and short-term training programs play a key role in ensuring students can earn credentials quickly and efficiently. To ensure support for such programs, HEA should:

1. Reexamine the definitions of higher education institutions and their use throughout the law, to ensure that public non-degree granting institutions, such as area CTE centers, are not penalized arbitrarily.
2. Allow institutions flexibility to provide innovative student-centric programs and services, such as competency-based education, stackable credentials, and dual enrollment programs.
3. Ensure that any institutional aid includes adequate access for institutions offering sub-baccalaureate level programs.

Priority 2: Ensure Adequate Access to Financial Aid Programs for All Students

Broad access to financial aid opportunities is essential in ensuring access to higher education for all students, particularly non-traditional students. HEA should:

1. Eliminate financial aid penalties for working and part-time students and for those seeking technical skills through non-credit coursework.
2. Reinstate Pell grant eligibility for students who demonstrate an ability to benefit (ATB), reinstate year-round Pell, revise the semester cap, and ease the ability to use Pell for short-term training courses and programs.

3. Prioritize employment related to field-of-study for work-study participants and allow related work-study to qualify for required internship or apprenticeship credit, as appropriate.
4. Evaluate financial aid rules and regulations, such as those on credit hours and gainful employment, to minimize negative impact on sub-baccalaureate public institutions.

Priority 3: Support CTE Teacher Preparation Programs & Alternative Paths to Certification

With a nationwide shortage of CTE teachers and a rapidly declining availability of CTE teacher preparation programs, a reauthorized bill should include a focus on CTE teacher development. HEA should:

1. Allow CTE teacher preparation programs access to funds under Title II of the HEA.
2. Include priorities or incentives for teacher preparation programs to teach strategies in integrating core academics with technical skills as required in the Carl D. Perkins CTE Act of 2006.
3. Increase access to efficient and effective alternative pathways to teacher certification for mid-career professionals, including through adjunct routes.
4. Reevaluate the emphasis on "highly qualified teachers" as defined in ESEA in favor of educator effectiveness.

Priority 4: Evaluate Data Collection Requirements to Reduce Burden and Ensure Program Integrity

Evidence-based policymaking is key to ensuring program effectiveness, but data collected should be relevant and structured in a way to avoid burden to institutions. HEA should:

1. Ensure that data requirements align across federal programs through common measures.
2. Require data sharing within and among states and local areas to better track post-program outcomes, including further education and employment.
3. Include information in data systems on certificates and industry-recognized credentials earned by students.
4. Ensure postsecondary data systems include all students and their short- and long-term outcomes.
5. Expand the use of labor market information in program evaluation and ensure such information is accessible to students at the program level.