Career and technical education (CTE) prepares students to be college- and career-ready by providing core academic skills, employability skills and technical, job-specific skills. It also fulfills employer needs in high-skill, high-wage, high-demand areas. CTE is delivered flexibly through high schools, area career centers, career academies, community and technical colleges, four-year universities and more. CTE prepares students for a range of career options through 16 Career Clusters® and more than 79 pathways. These Career Clusters include subjects that touch virtually every sector of the economy and are much more diverse than what used to be known as “vocational education.” Students today take CTE classes in subjects ranging from health science and information technology to engineering, construction, business and marketing. These classes lead students to industry certifications, licenses, and postsecondary certificates and degrees.

Benefits for High School Students
High school students overwhelmingly participate in CTE, with 92 percent earning CTE credit, and many making a significant investment of time in CTE.* Secondary CTE students are more engaged, graduate at higher rates and typically go on to postsecondary education. Among the many benefits that CTE delivers at the secondary level:

- Students who take one CTE class for every two academic classes minimize their risk of dropping out.
- The average high school graduation rate for students concentrating in CTE programs is 10 points higher than the overall graduation rate.
- 91 percent of graduates who earned 2-3 CTE credits go on to postsecondary education.

Opportunities for Postsecondary CTE Students
Almost 8.5 million individuals are seeking postsecondary certificates and associate degrees in CTE fields. Postsecondary CTE prepares students and adults for in-demand careers, and allows them to assume less debt while doing so. Among the many benefits of CTE at the postsecondary level:

- Postsecondary CTE concentrators achieve significantly higher earnings than those who majored in academic fields, particularly those employed in an industry related to their program of study.
- 27 percent of people with less than an associate degree, including those with licenses and certificates, earn more than the average bachelor's degree recipient.
- Students can attend public community and technical colleges for a fraction of the cost of tuition at other institutions. In 2018-19, the average cost of tuition at public two-year colleges ($3,660) was 36 percent of the average price of attending a public, in-state four-year institution; 14 percent of the average public four-year out-of-state college; and 10 percent of the average private nonprofit four-year college.

Business, Industry and the Economy All Depend on High-quality CTE
CTE addresses the needs of business and industry and helps close the skills gap by preparing students with high-level skills for in-demand jobs. Among the many benefits of CTE for the economy:

- Skilled trades workers, administrative staff, drivers, technicians, sales representatives, health care professionals, hospitality staff and manufacturing workers are some of the top jobs that employers are having trouble filling in the U.S., and CTE plays a critical role in training workers in these areas.
- The nation’s four fastest-growing occupations require education below a bachelor’s degree, as do half of all STEM jobs.
- 89 percent of manufacturers report talent shortages, with 60 percent reporting that the skills shortage will have a high or very high impact on productivity.
- Investments in CTE yield big returns for state economies. For example, Colorado Community College System alumni in the workforce contribute $5.1 billion annually to the state, and in Wisconsin, taxpayers receive $12.20 in benefits for every dollar invested in the technical college system.

* This includes occupationally specific courses, career exploration courses and Family and Consumer Sciences courses.

For additional information and citations for the facts above, visit acteonline.org/basic-facts or contact cinperatore@acteonline.org.
1. Significantly Increase Funding for Perkins CTE State Grants in FY 2020
The Perkins Basic State Grant program is the principal source of dedicated federal funding for CTE, which helps build the capacity of secondary and postsecondary institutions to serve millions of students nationwide. Perkins Basic State Grant funds are allocated to all 50 states through a need-based formula, and are designed to help ensure all students have the academic, technical and employability skills they will need for career success. Congress overwhelmingly approved the reauthorization of the Perkins Act in 2018. Going forward, lawmakers must fulfill their commitment to states and locals to support the implementation the new Act, and to provide the resources necessary to promote student success, through increased funding for the Perkins Basic State Grant program.

Increasing Perkins funding will expand access to high-quality CTE programs to a greater number of secondary, postsecondary and adult learners. It will support students in achieving strong employment outcomes, enrolling in postsecondary education and attaining essential skills. It will strengthen the capacity of school districts and postsecondary institutions to deliver academically rigorous CTE content, ensure support for special populations, afford the latest technology and equipment, strengthen employer partnerships, provide college and career counseling services, and deliver educator professional development opportunities.

By preparing individuals for postsecondary education and rewarding careers, CTE is a smart investment for the future—for learners, families, employers and the nation. Therefore, we call upon Congress to continue working toward the goal of doubling the federal investment in Perkins CTE State Grants. To achieve this goal, while empowering states and CTE educators to effectively implement the new Perkins Act, we urge a significant increase in funding for the Perkins Basic State Grant program in FY 2020.

2. Ensure Higher Education Act Reauthorization Reflects Today’s Diverse Postsecondary Education Landscape
The labor market demand for a skilled workforce increasingly requires employees to have some type of postsecondary education. CTE is a major and long-standing enterprise within the American higher education system that continually evolves to meet the needs of today’s students and employers. The reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) provides an opportunity for Congress to strengthen its support of postsecondary CTE programs and students by reducing barriers to high-quality programs, ensuring appropriate data is available about postsecondary options, and strengthening the CTE teacher pipeline. A reauthorized HEA should:

- Reduce barriers to higher education for all.
  - Expand Pell grant eligibility for short-term training courses and programs by incorporating the bipartisan JOBS Act, and eliminate penalties for working students.
  - 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.
  - Promote innovative, student-centric models like competency-based education and dual enrollment.

- Ensure program quality and integrity while reducing data collection burdens.
  - Eliminate the ban on a federal student unit record data system to ease data collection and reporting burdens.
  - Include program level information in data systems and track employment outcomes, as well as information on certificates, licenses and industry-recognized certifications earned by students.

- Support the development and preparation of CTE educators.
  - Incentivize CTE teacher preparation program development through HEA Title II funds.
  - Preserve TEACH Grants and educator loan forgiveness programs and create other supports for current and future teachers.
  - Increase access to efficient and effective alternative pathways to teacher certification for mid-career professionals.

3. Build an Infrastructure Workforce Pipeline by Supporting CTE Programs of Study
Addressing the deficiencies in our nation’s vital infrastructure will require more than just new investments in roads, bridges, airports and waterways. It must also include a commitment to developing the skilled workforce that can design, build, upgrade and maintain that infrastructure. Jobs in infrastructure require individuals with a range of different skills, competencies and levels of education. Local CTE programs are well positioned to equip students and incumbent workers with the educational opportunities and work-based learning they will need for career success in infrastructure fields. Federal infrastructure legislation should include dedicated resources to develop and expand CTE programs of study that are essential to creating a robust workforce pipeline to rebuild our infrastructure and secure its sustainability for the future.

4. Oppose Efforts to Consolidate the Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE)
In 2018, the Department of Education announced a plan to merge OCTAE with the Office of Postsecondary Education into a new “Office of Postsecondary and Lifelong Learning.” This agency consolidation would eliminate the Assistant Secretary position for CTE and significantly reduce the visibility of CTE within the department.

CTE encompasses far more than just postsecondary education, and an office dedicated to the unique role CTE plays in the nation’s education system is critical. Amidst a widening skills gap, shrinking CTE’s presence in the Department of Education is a mistake. The plan would require congressional approval, and the FY 2019 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill passed by Congress in 2018 included language that was critical of the department’s proposal. However, the plan, or a variation on it, could still be brought forward and presented to Congress in 2019. ACTE urges lawmakers to oppose all efforts to consolidate OCTAE going forward and to instead support a robust role for CTE within the Administration.
Skilled trades workers, accounting and finance staff, nurses, and technicians are some of the top careers that employers are having difficulty filling. Investments in CTE yield big returns for state economies. For example, Colorado Community College System alumni in the workforce contribute $5.1 billion annually to the state, and in Wisconsin, taxpayers receive $12.20 in benefits for every dollar invested in the technical college system.

Both the Senate and House have bipartisan CTE caucuses that work in Congress to enhance awareness of CTE’s important role in preparing a well-educated and skilled workforce in America. To join the CTE Caucus, contact the office of any of the co-chairs. In the Senate, the co-chairs are Sens. Tim Kaine (D-VA), Rob Portman (R-OH), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Todd Young (R-IN). In the House, the co-chairs are Reps. Glenn Thompson (R-PA) and Jim Langevin (D-RI).

About ACTE
The Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) is the nation’s largest not-for-profit association committed to the advancement of education that prepares youth and adults for successful careers. ACTE represents the community of CTE professionals, including educators, administrators, researchers, school counselors, guidance and career development professionals and others at all levels of education. ACTE is committed to excellence in providing advocacy, public awareness and access to resources, professional development and leadership opportunities.

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