



Higher Education Act



The importance of employees 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 American higher education system that continually evolves to meet the needs of today's students and employers. In fact, many students who obtain in-demand postsecondary CTE credentials are outearning college graduates with non-CTE credentials. To strengthen the role of CTE in America's higher education system, the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) presents the following recommendations for the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA):

1. **Reduce Barriers to Higher Education for All**

All students, including nontraditional students, need the ability to choose postsecondary courses and financial aid programs that meet their individual needs and allow them to earn credentials quickly and efficiently.

- a. Re-examine 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.
- b. Incentivize innovative student-centric programs and services, such as competency-based education, stackable credentials, dual enrollment programs, programs of study and career pathways; and provide flexibility to ensure financial aid programs do not penalize students in these programs.
- c. Eliminate financial aid penalties for working and part-time students and for those seeking technical skills through non-credit coursework, and increase access to support services for these students.
- d. Reinstate full Pell grant eligibility for students who demonstrate an ability to benefit (ATB), maintain year-round Pell, revise the semester cap, and ease the ability to use Pell for short-term training courses and programs.
- e. 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.
- f. Evaluate financial aid rules and regulations, such as those on credit hours and gainful employment, to minimize negative impact on sub-baccalaureate public institutions.
- g. Ensure accreditation practices do not penalize specific institutions or innovative program models, and instead focus on program quality and student outcomes.

2. **Ensure Program Quality and Integrity While Reducing Data Collection Burdens**

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.

- a. Ensure that data requirements align across federal programs through common measures, as appropriate.
- b. Require data sharing within and among states and local areas to better track post-program outcomes, including further education and employment, and provide resources to strengthen state longitudinal data systems.
- c. Include information in data systems on certificates, licenses and industry-recognized certifications earned by students.
- d. Ensure postsecondary data systems include all students and their short- and long-term outcomes.
- e. Expand the use of labor market information in program evaluation and ensure disaggregation at the program level.
- f. Eliminate the ban on a federal student unit record data system to ease data collection and reporting burdens.

3. **Support CTE Teacher Preparation Programs and Alternative Paths to Certification**

There is a nationwide shortage of CTE teachers and a rapidly declining availability of CTE teacher preparation programs that should be addressed in HEA.

- a. Allow CTE teacher preparation programs to access funds under Title II of HEA, and include incentives for these programs to focus on integrating core academics and technical skills.
- b. Preserve TEACH Grants and educator loan forgiveness programs and create other supports for current and future CTE teachers.
- c. Increase access to efficient and effective alternative pathways to teacher certification for mid-career professionals.