



## Texas Workforce Investment Council

# Policy News Highlights

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**T**exas Workforce Investment Council – *Policy News Highlights* is a quarterly review of selected reports relevant to the policy and research functions of the Texas Workforce Investment Council (Council). Federal and state agency websites, in addition to numerous public policy and educational databases are scanned monthly for relevant and emerging issues. Reports are catalogued and stored electronically in the Council’s Information Repository (IR).

The IR is divided into 11 topic areas that correspond to priority issues supporting the Council’s current strategic plan. They are: adult education; apprenticeship; career and college readiness; career and technical education; clusters and sector strategies; competitiveness; data; disabilities; dropout prevention; green initiatives; and training.

*Policy News Highlights* is organized into three sections, beginning with a summary of an article that highlights recent workforce trends and issues. The second section contains abbreviated summaries of recent articles of interest, and the final section consists of a comprehensive list of all articles and their sources that were added to the IR in the last quarter.

## This Quarter’s Selected Article

***Giving Credit Where Credit is Due: Creating a Competency-Based Qualifications Framework for Postsecondary Education and Training***, Center for Law and Social Policy, April 2011.

To meet the national goal of a stronger workforce by increasing the number of Americans with postsecondary credentials, this paper suggests implementing a large-scale initiative of *Giving Credit Where Credit is Due: Creating a Competency-Based Qualifications Framework for Postsecondary Education and Training*. Workforce leaders, politicians, and educators agree that the key to maintaining United States (U.S.) global competitiveness is a strong economy sustained by a highly skilled workforce. Workers are increasingly expected to be competent in critical thinking and in the ability to learn and apply knowledge to continuously changing technology. Noncredit occupational training and education makes up almost half of all

postsecondary education in the U.S. according to this article. Of the nation’s 43 million students in postsecondary enrollment, approximately 20.8 million are enrolled in noncredit programs. This article makes the case for establishing a national qualifications framework that can award educational credit based on demonstrated competencies gained through noncredit occupational education and training.

At any juncture in an adult’s working life, he or she may receive noncredit education and training to improve performance or marketability within a given field. If such training is received outside of education, that is, through an employer, an



apprenticeship, or the military, it is “disconnected” from traditional educational pathways and credentials. Not receiving credit for this training may require this same person to repeat training if he or she later decides to pursue a postsecondary credential.

*Giving Credit Where Credit is Due* unequivocally states that creating this competency-based framework is an enormous task, fraught with many challenges. It must be designed to enable institutions to award credit for competencies that are learned through noncredit occupational training and education. It must also ensure that these competencies are recognized by postsecondary institutions and within various economic sectors across the country. The authors emphasize that such an “outcome-based” focus would bridge the existing gap between credit-bearing and noncredit workforce training and education programs.

The paper cites a number of current national initiatives and suggests these would be good models for both the framework itself and the task of bringing it to scale. For example, at the state level, numerous programs across the country pre-approve “crosswalks” or equivalencies between industry certifications and credit programs at educational institutions.

Ivy Tech Community College in Indiana has a certification crosswalk whereby faculty determines academic equivalence with regard to apprenticeship programs and industry certifications. Wisconsin Technical College System has bridge programs for career pathways and apprenticeships. Oregon’s Career Pathway initiative incorporates employer involvement and competency standards resulting in certificates that award credit that is applicable to postsecondary credentials.

*Giving Credit Where Credit is Due* details many programs before presenting the major findings:

- Economic growth, personal income and job security increasingly depend on postsecondary credentials with labor market value.
- A vast number of adults engage in creditworthy occupational education and training, but they cannot translate their education and training into postsecondary credit in the absence of a system that can equate noncredit occupational education and training to educational credit.
- A major roadblock to creating such a system is reliance on the credit hour as the metric for learning. What is needed is a system that assesses competency, rather than seat time, to measure learning.
- There is a wide variety of credentials, but without common metrics or quality assurance mechanisms, they are not portable and their value is not transparent to employers, educators, or students.
- Current national, state, and institutional-level efforts to address this problem are insufficient compared to the scale of need.

In closing, *Giving Credit Where Credit is Due* recommends a broad initiative supporting state, local and institutional efforts to remove barriers between noncredit and credit-bearing instruction in the U.S. with the following goals:

- Create a national competency-based framework.
- Reduce institutional barriers between credit and noncredit-bearing education.
- Link the data systems of federal and state governments and educational institutions to provide a more comprehensive picture of student learning outcomes. ★



Abbreviated Summaries

Adult Education

*The Return On Investment (ROI) From Adult Education and Training Measuring the Economic Impact of a Better Educated and Trained U.S. Workforce*, McGraw-Hill Research Foundation, May 2011.

This paper argues that public investment in adult education provides real economic benefit to the U.S., despite the current focus on reducing deficits at both the national and state level. The authors state that a “preemptive focus” on adult education in times of economic duress actually saves government money because it enlarges the country’s available pool of workers while reducing costs for healthcare, public assistance and incarceration. The paper highlights economic modeling tools used by the Alliance for Excellent Education that quantify societal gains from investing in adult education.

For example, the article examines the effect of educational achievement on 45 of the largest metropolitan areas in the U.S. It finds that if half of the 2008 high school dropouts had graduated, these metropolitan areas would have enjoyed an additional \$4.1 billion in yearly earnings in their communities. State and local tax revenues would have been higher, at an additional \$536 million each year. The authors contend that adult education can recover much of this loss. The paper cites some statistics for Texas, as well:

- For every \$1.00 of government benefits, the average adult without a high school diploma paid \$1.02 in taxes.
- For every \$1.00 of benefits received, the average adult with a high school diploma paid \$2.78 in taxes, while those with some college paid \$5.00 in taxes.

The authors further point out that if these adults had diplomas or the equivalent, their annual net fiscal contribution would be \$13.5 billion and another \$10.6 billion if they attended college. ★

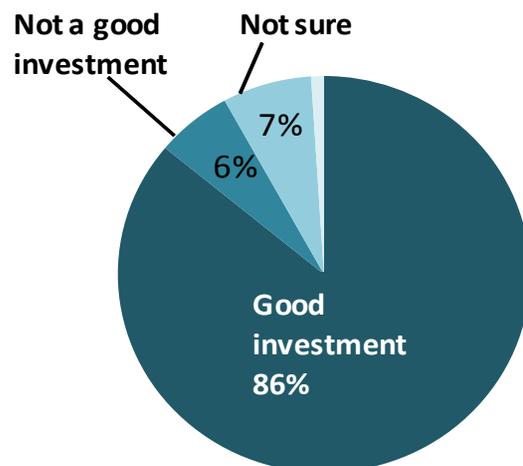
Career and College Readiness

*Is College Worth It? College Presidents, Public Assess Value, Quality and Mission of Higher Education*, Pew Social and Demographic Trends, May 2011.

This Pew Center research report is based upon two surveys conducted this spring. One national survey was conducted by telephone and involved a representative sample of 2,142 persons 18 years of age and older. The other survey was an online sampling of 1,055 college presidents at two- and four-year, public, private and for-profit institutions. Among key findings were that 57 percent of Americans believe the U.S. higher education system fails to provide good value for cost, while 75 percent believe that college is too expensive. Nevertheless, 86 percent of those surveyed believed that college was a good investment for them personally. Survey respondents, including those with a four-year college degree and those without, thought that

Has College Been a Good Investment for You?

Share of college graduates who say...



Excerpted from, *Is College Worth It?* Pew Research Center, p. 6. Note: Above graphic based on four-year college graduates ages 18-64 who are not currently enrolled in school, n=513. “Don’t know/Refused” responses are shown but not labeled.

the college degree added about \$20,000 to an individual's annual income. This answer was very close to the \$19,550 gap reported by the U.S. Census bureau in 2010 between high school graduates and college graduates.

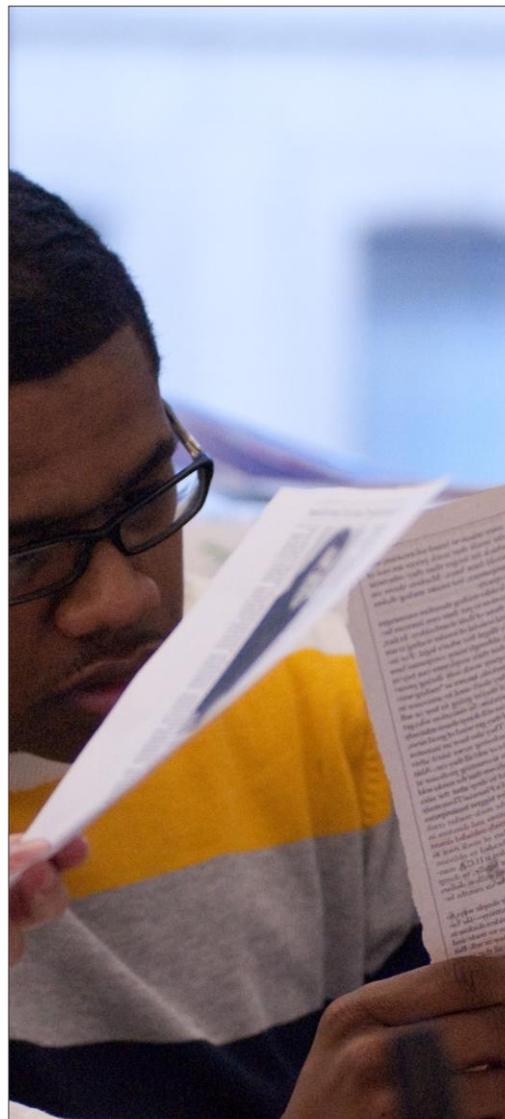
Among college presidents, 60 percent believe that higher education is going in the right direction in the U.S., but a large minority, 38 percent, believes it is headed in the wrong direction. Fifty-eight percent believe that public school students are less well prepared for college now than ten years ago, and 52 percent say that students study less than they did ten years ago. Almost two-thirds do not believe that the U.S. can achieve the goal set by the President of having the highest share in the world of young adults with postsecondary education certificates or degrees by 2020. Last, about half of college presidents think college is to help students mature and thrive intellectually while about half believe it is to learn skills for the working world. Presidents of four-year colleges believe the main role of college is to mature young people while most presidents of two-year colleges believe the purpose of college is to acquire skills and training for the workplace. ★

***From GED to College Degree: Creating Pathways to Postsecondary Success for High School Dropouts,***  
Jobs for the Future, 2011.

For several decades the General Education Development (GED) certificate has been thought of as a safety net for those who have dropped out of high school. It has opened the door to further education and economic opportunities for millions of adults in the U.S. Approximately 680,000 test-takers complete the full set of GED exams yearly, with nearly 70 percent passing, and over 60 percent planning to continue their education. However, this paper points to new research indicating that few recipients of GEDs actually persist in postsecondary education to complete a degree or credential. For example, while nearly half of individuals who take the GED enroll in postsecondary education, only four percent will continue and earn a degree.

The paper documents several innovative approaches that go beyond basic test-oriented GED preparation for a secondary certificate,

to new “college-connected” designs that better prepare students to enter and complete postsecondary programs.



These designs integrate college-ready instruction with academic and social supports, provide “postsecondary bridging” with transition counseling, and offer first-year supports to assist students recently enrolled in postsecondary education. In Part I of the paper, the author examines current areas of challenge to a new design such as student preparation and teaching methodology. Part II presents a framework for educators to consider and Part III contains public policy suggestions for supporting a more college-oriented GED. The following table is excerpted from the article, and illustrates some of the proposed changes from current GED practices to future approaches:

The Shift from GED to College: Program Practices	
TRADITIONAL GED	GED TO COLLEGE
» Focus on the GED test as ultimate indicator of student success and program performance	→ Build a college-going culture where college is an expectation for all students and college access and completion are the ultimate program performance measures
» Instruction focused on minimum literacy and numeracy skills students need to pass the GED test	→ Enriched curriculum and classroom instruction and incorporation of critical thinking, high-level literacy, and numeracy skills needed for success in college
» Multiple entry and exit points for students during the year	→ Clear entry and exit points to create cohorts of students, reinforcing group learning and peer support
» Limited assessment of college readiness skills	→ Use of broad set of pre-and post-assessment instructions (e.g., ACCUPLACER, COMPASS) to measure readiness for credit-bearing classes
» Standalone programming with limited links to postsecondary institutions	→ Strong partnership with a postsecondary institution to facilitate curricular alignment and leveraging of resources on both sides to support student transition
» Minimal integration of career exploration and planning	→ Include a range of career exploration and planning activities to link classroom activities to student college aspirations
» Insufficient financial resources to ensure quality and sustainability of program offerings	→ Adequate public and private funding to sustain programs and services needed to support the transition to college

Excerpted from *GED to College Degree: Creating Pathways to Postsecondary Success for High School Dropouts, Jobs for the Future*, page 3.

## Competitiveness

**Advancing American Economic Competitiveness Through Latino Immigrant Worker Success**, Corporation for a Skilled Workforce, April 2011.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Hispanic workers will account for nearly half of the potential workforce between 2004 and 2014. The paper states that this demographic is hampered by a skills gap, because Hispanics often do not have the training and education necessary to meet current industry demands for family sustaining jobs.

“Hispanics currently represent nearly 15 percent of the workforce or 22 million workers, of which 15.7 million (71 percent) are U.S born or naturalized citizens.”

**These workers are young and have the highest labor force participation rate of any major race and ethnic group— at 68.5 percent in 2008.**

—Advancing American Economic Competitiveness Through Latino Immigrant Worker Success

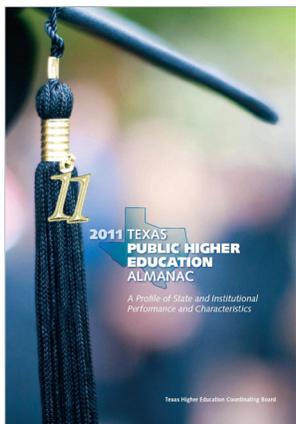
*Advancing American Economic Competitiveness* identifies five themes for policymakers to consider as they devise strategies to tap into this fast-growing pool of workers to fuel the American economy:

- Create a sense of urgency – because educating and supporting Hispanic workers is a question of economic and workforce competitiveness.
- Advance the transformation of K-20 education – because many of today’s skilled jobs require education beyond a high school diploma.

- Treat work as an asset to learning and education – by promoting that employment is an asset to higher education, not a barrier.
- Encourage and incent collaboration – because individuals, organizations, communities and systems cannot reach their goals in isolation.
- Promote progressive employer practices – because a socially responsible workplace fosters an environment that promotes advancement and success. ★

## Data

**2011 Public Higher Education Almanac - A Profile of State and Institutional Performance and Characteristics**, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, April 2011.



This is the first edition of the *Texas Public Higher Education Almanac* and it is intended to provide policymakers, students, parents, and the public information on higher educational institutional performance. In 2000, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board launched *Closing the Gaps by 2015*, an initiative

designed to bring Texas into line with the country's ten largest states regarding higher education attainment. The *Higher Education Almanac* is the product of a partnership between that state agency and private philanthropic institutions. The *Almanac* aims for a transparent process to collect and disseminate data on higher education. It has national recognition as a best practices model. The *Almanac* shows Texas is making progress toward closing the gap, but challenges remain. For example, the state enjoys high measures of access to higher education and enrollment, but less success when it comes to students actually completing degrees and certificate programs. Enrollment for both two- and four-year higher education institutions rose by 47 percent since 2000, but Texas ranks 26th nationally in attainment of Bachelor's degrees, and 45th nationally in attainment of Associate's degrees. ★

## Green

***Driving Workforce Change – Regional Impact and Implications of Auto Industry Transformation to a Green Economy***, U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, May 2011.

This comprehensive paper is the product of a research consortium comprised of the Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio Labor Market Information offices and their strategic partners, with funding support from the U.S. Department of Labor. It focuses on the auto industry in these three states, although many of its findings and its methodology could apply to other sectors. The paper examines efforts in this tri-state region to revitalize the industry, to adapt to the greening of the economy, and to propose options for transforming the skills of displaced workers.

The *Driving Change* consortium had four goals at the outset:

- Chronicle the transformation from the old auto industry to a new, more efficient auto industry, especially focusing on the new skill and training requirements of the auto workforce.
- Identify the effects of this structural transformation on the auto parts supply chain workforce.
- Examine green job opportunities now and in the future as alternative career pathways for displaced workers.
- Identify the skills gap and the required educational and technical training needed for dislocated workers to transition into new occupations.



The researchers built several processes, including grouping occupations into pathway clusters and the development of a “trip time” tool that measures the time it takes to move from one occupation to another when acquiring skills for the new job. The study produced a database for green and growing occupations to accompany trip time results, accessible at [www.drivingworkforcechange.org](http://www.drivingworkforcechange.org). ★

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**Note to readers: While links were operational when *Policy News Highlights* was published, some may become outdated or otherwise nonfunctioning. The reader may access articles by Internet search or by going to the website of the entity that published the report.**

**The Texas Workforce Investment Council promotes the development of a well-educated, highly skilled workforce for Texas and advocates a workforce system that provides quality workforce education and training opportunities.**

For more information, visit:

<http://governor.state.tx.us/twic/>

