



## Texas Workforce Investment Council

# *Policy News Highlights*

Issue 27, Quarter 3, September 2014

*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 12 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, supply-demand, and training. Not every topic area is addressed each quarter.

*Policy News Highlights* is organized as an annotated bibliography with short summaries of recent articles grouped according to their topic area.

### Adult Education

***Investing in English Skills: The Limited English Proficient Workforce in U.S. Metropolitan Areas***, Brookings Institute, September 2014

Most English language learners (ELL) adults historically live in large metropolitan areas; however, findings in this report illustrate growth of the ELL population, in contrast with the foreign-born population, and suggest that their numbers are growing fastest in smaller metropolitan areas. California and Texas have the largest ELL shares of the population. While most ELL working age adults participate in the labor force, speak Spanish, and have a high school diploma, the native languages and educational attainment of ELL adults vary across regions. Other findings suggest that these workers are generally less educated and earn considerably less than their English proficient counterparts. Recommendations include increasing investment in adult English instruction to increase the productivity of highly skilled, yet underemployed immigrants and improving the educational outcomes of the next generation.

[www.brookings.edu/~media/Research/Files/Reports/2014/09/english%20skills/Srvy\\_EnglishSkills\\_Sep22.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Research/Files/Reports/2014/09/english%20skills/Srvy_EnglishSkills_Sep22.pdf)

***Providing Disadvantaged Workers with Skills to Succeed in the Labor Market***, The Hamilton Project, Brookings Institute, June 2014

To improve publicly funded vocational training and increase the employment and earnings outcomes of disadvantaged workers, this paper recommends policy changes and explores several questions about effective vocational training strategies. Disadvantaged workers are more likely to experience periods of unemployment, which continue to challenge their ability to obtain and continue to develop marketable skills. Two primary concerns about technical training programs are presented in the paper: the number of participants who start but do not complete training programs and those who do not find a job in the occupation for which they have been trained. Evidence-based approaches such as the provision of

guidance for better decision making about training and services to support the workers while enrolled in training are recommended to address the needs of disadvantaged adult learners and employers. Strategies are directed at state and local workforce boards to align these approaches with local employer demand and test and refine best practices with grant funding.

[www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2014/06/19\\_hamilton\\_policies\\_addressing\\_poverty/disadvantaged\\_workers\\_skills\\_mcconnell\\_perez\\_johnson\\_berk.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2014/06/19_hamilton_policies_addressing_poverty/disadvantaged_workers_skills_mcconnell_perez_johnson_berk.pdf)

## Apprenticeship

***Innovations in Apprenticeship: 5 Case Studies That Illustrate the Promise of Apprenticeship in the United States***, Center for American Progress, September 2014

Several innovative models for work-based learning and for navigating the obstacles to expansion of the apprenticeship system in the U.S. are explored in this report. Lack of awareness and a persistent focus on traditional occupations are cited among the challenges faced by U.S. apprenticeship programs. Effective funding strategies, thorough skills assessments, effective marketing, and business engagement are considered key elements of compelling models. The report also provides detailed case studies to demonstrate strategies that increase enrollment in apprenticeship programs and to facilitate expansion of apprenticeship into new sectors and occupations.

[cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/ApprenticeshipInnov-report1.pdf](http://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/ApprenticeshipInnov-report1.pdf)

***Training for Success: A Policy to Expand Apprenticeships in the United States***, Center for American Progress, July 2014

To meet anticipated shortages of workers with postsecondary credentials, this report considers challenges and offers policy recommendations to expand apprenticeship programs. While the system of registered apprenticeships in the U.S. ensures a nationally recognized portable credential for apprentices, the system for administering apprenticeships is disjointed. This makes it difficult to collect data and develop a uniform credentialing system. Improvements to marketing efforts, online access to workers, and research and data collection are recommended to promote greater understanding of the economic benefits of apprenticeships and available program opportunities. Tax incentives and competitive grants for public-private partnerships are also recommended to provide technical support and help businesses defray cost in order to overcome challenges associated with initiating apprenticeship programs.

[cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/apprenticeship\\_report.pdf](http://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/apprenticeship_report.pdf)

***Expanding Apprenticeship Opportunities in the United States***, The Hamilton Project, Brookings Institute, June 2014

Based on a study of apprentices in the state of Washington, the average cost per participant is approximately \$5,500 and results in an average of nearly \$78,000 in increased earnings over the two and a half years after completing the program and roughly \$440,000 on projected lifetime earnings through age sixty-five. Comparatively, the effect on earnings of community college professionals or technical program graduates are \$175,000 through age sixty-five at a cost of about \$20,000 as cited in this report.

Recommendations suggest that expanding apprenticeship can potentially have a significant impact on improving student success outcomes and the efficiency of workforce development funding. It concludes that the dramatic increase in apprenticeship programs in other countries offers strong evidence that building a robust apprenticeship program in the U.S is feasible but requires leadership and effective implementation.

[www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2014/06/19\\_hamilton\\_policies\\_addressing\\_poverty/expand\\_apprenticeships\\_united\\_states\\_lerman.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2014/06/19_hamilton_policies_addressing_poverty/expand_apprenticeships_united_states_lerman.pdf)

## Career and College Readiness

***America's College Drop-Out Epidemic: Understanding the College Drop-Out Population***, National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research, American Institutes for Research, September 2014  
Many of the students who are not enrolling in college and students who enroll but drop out of four-year colleges demonstrate low academic preparedness for college according to this report. It estimates probabilities of degree completion for alternative pathway options through college for these students. Completion data indicate that alternative options, such as associate's degree programs or two-year to four-year transfer, would significantly improve postsecondary success including bachelor's degree attainment for students who enter a pathway at a two-year institution. Findings suggest that individualized guidance toward postsecondary enrollment decisions based upon a student's level of preparedness would be prudent until the level of postsecondary preparation improves in the K-12 education system.

[www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/AIR-CALDER-Understanding-the-College-Dropout-Population-Jan14.pdf](http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/AIR-CALDER-Understanding-the-College-Dropout-Population-Jan14.pdf)

***Is it Worth It? Postsecondary Education and Labor Market Outcomes for the Disadvantaged***, National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research, American Institutes for Research, September 2014

Using state level administrative data on students in the state of Florida, this paper explores postsecondary and labor market outcomes for minorities and economically disadvantaged workers. Incentives for young people to pursue postsecondary education have increased enrollment for all groups; however, minorities and economically disadvantaged students lag significantly behind their counterparts in attaining credentials, which contributes to poor labor market outcomes. This study aligned secondary school data with detailed information on postsecondary college and course selection, intermediate outcomes for the labor market, and other factors to offer new insight into the college experiences of two recent cohorts of over 210,000 students. Findings suggest that poor information among students and few incentives for institutions to guide and prepare students for well-paying and high-demand fields lead to high concentrations of students in low-completion areas. Recommendations include improvements to guidance, reforms to programs and services, high quality career information, and experimentation with work-based learning models and other alternate career pathways.

[www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Postsecondary%20Education%20and%20Labor%20Market%20Outcomes%20for%20the%20Disadvantaged\\_9.15.14.pdf](http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Postsecondary%20Education%20and%20Labor%20Market%20Outcomes%20for%20the%20Disadvantaged_9.15.14.pdf)

***Major Decisions: What Graduates Earn Over Their Lifetimes***, The Hamilton Project, Brookings Institute, September 2014

Examining annual earnings for each year of the career and cumulative lifetime earnings, this report confirms the value of a college degree. The focus of this study, however, is to inform decision making regarding personal investments in higher education. It explores almost 80 college majors and considers both the weak labor market during and after the Great Recession and earnings for all full- and part-time workers in the analysis. Findings suggest that college graduates will earn more over their lifetimes than individuals with a high school diploma even if the degree is in a major with low earnings potential and entry into the labor market is during a recession. However, lifetime earnings significantly vary by major. An interactive tool complements this report to support career exploration and comparative analysis of career earnings by college major.

[www.hamiltonproject.org/files/downloads\\_and\\_links/Major\\_Decisions\\_Lifetime\\_Earnings\\_by\\_Major.pdf](http://www.hamiltonproject.org/files/downloads_and_links/Major_Decisions_Lifetime_Earnings_by_Major.pdf)

***The Shape of Deeper Learning: Strategies, Structures, and Cultures in Deeper Learning Network High Schools***, American Institutes for Research, September 2014

One in a series of research reports, this report highlights outcomes of an initiative to design or redesign instructional strategies, programs, and cultures in a group of high schools that emphasize deeper learning. Deeper learning strategies focus on what students need to know and developing an ability to apply this acquired knowledge and skill to unique tasks and situations in order to increase the levels of proficiency and preparedness for college-level work. This report describes the approaches implemented in the sample schools to develop deeper learning competencies, such as project-based learning, interpersonal skill development, learning to learn, and decision-making skills.

[www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Report%201%20The%20Shape%20of%20Deeper%20Learning\\_9-23-14v2.pdf](http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Report%201%20The%20Shape%20of%20Deeper%20Learning_9-23-14v2.pdf)

***Improving Employment Outcomes for Disadvantaged College Students***, The Hamilton Project, Brookings Institute, June 2014

Sectoral training, in which education providers work with employers to educate and train directly for the job requirements of high-demand sectors, is proposed as a more effective pathway for low-income students in this report. With an emphasis on labor market outcomes and higher earnings, this work-based learning approach addresses the unique needs of economically disadvantaged students, supports completion, much like apprenticeship or incumbent worker training, and appears to have significant impact on earnings. The study finds that many states are attempting to integrate education and training programs, partnerships with employers or industry associations for sectoral training, and career pathways with broad economic development goals.

[www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2014/06/19\\_hamilton\\_policies\\_addressing\\_poverty/improve\\_employment\\_disadvantaged\\_students\\_holzer.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2014/06/19_hamilton_policies_addressing_poverty/improve_employment_disadvantaged_students_holzer.pdf)

## Career and Technical Education

***The Pathways to Prosperity Network: A State Progress Report, 2012–2014***, Harvard Graduate School of Education and Jobs for the Future, July 2014

This report highlights the work of eight states—California, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, Ohio, and Tennessee—that use work-based learning to prepare high school students for the workforce. The model provides middle and high school students with a systematic and sustained approach that will, according to the report, lead to a postsecondary credential with value in the labor market. It initiates opportunities to connect school with postsecondary pathways and employment and helps students navigate transitions between institutions and occupations and make effective decisions about training for their futures.

[www.jff.org/sites/default/files/publications/materials/Pathways-to-Prosperity-for-Americas-youth-062314.pdf](http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/publications/materials/Pathways-to-Prosperity-for-Americas-youth-062314.pdf)

## Competitiveness

***OECD Regional Outlook 2014: Regions and Cities: Where Policies and People Meet***, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, October 2014

Estimates of 60 percent of the world's populations are expected to live in urban areas by 2030. This global trend toward urbanization led to closer examination of the role that cities play in economic

competitiveness. Because productivity and wages are higher in urban areas, this approach explores how cities function as sources of innovation, prosperity, and growth, and recommends policies to boost productivity potential. It considers regional trends, key issues, and the impact of the 2008 economic crisis. Better use of existing production factors are identified as key drivers of growth whereas, increasing capital and labor are found to be less significant factors. Findings suggest that all types of regions contribute to national growth and differentiated approaches are needed to tap unique assets for growth. Regional hubs are key to performance; however, since most growth occurs outside of the hubs, rural areas can be key contributors. Aging and migration are also major trends affecting performance.

[www.oecd.org/gov/regional-policy/oecd-regional-outlook-2014-9789264201415-en.htm](http://www.oecd.org/gov/regional-policy/oecd-regional-outlook-2014-9789264201415-en.htm)

***International Benchmarking: State and National Education Performance Standards***, American Institutes for Research, September 2014

Revealing a significant gap in performance expectations, this report recommends reducing the variability between states' performance standards to improve student achievement and national competitiveness. It finds a variance as wide as three to four grade levels in mathematics and reading proficiency scores between states with the highest state performance standards and those with the lowest standards. This analysis follows up on a previous 2007 American Institutes for Research report and uses international benchmarking as a common metric to compare what students are expected to learn in some states with what students are expected to learn in other states in order to be considered proficient in the learning content. States reporting the highest numbers of proficient students had the lowest performance standards and vice versa. The international benchmarking provided a measure of the global competitiveness of each state standard and the comparison of state expectations.

[www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/AIR\\_International%20Benchmarking-State%20and%20National%20Ed%20Performance%20Standards\\_Sept2014.pdf](http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/AIR_International%20Benchmarking-State%20and%20National%20Ed%20Performance%20Standards_Sept2014.pdf)

***The Competitiveness of Cities: A Report of the Global Agenda Council on Competitiveness***, World Economic Forum, August 2014

Recognizing the leadership role that cities play in addressing factors that stimulate the competitiveness of regions and countries, this report considers global trends that impact productivity and growth in cities and offers a taxonomy of drivers of competitiveness. Global trends include urbanization, demographics and the emerging middle class, rising inequality, sustainability, technological change, industry clusters and global value chains, and governance. Rapid urbanization is driving cities to make improvements that develop and sustain productivity. The four-part taxonomy of city competitiveness includes institutions, policies and regulation of the business environment, hard connectivity (core physical infrastructure), and soft connectivity (education, social capital, digital infrastructure, livability). Successful cities are suggested to be flexible and adaptable with priorities tailored to specific conditions and opportunities. The report recommends that cities embrace the opportunity of urbanization and expedite reforms.

[www3.weforum.org/docs/GAC/2014/WEF\\_GAC\\_CompetitivenessOfCities\\_Report\\_2014.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GAC/2014/WEF_GAC_CompetitivenessOfCities_Report_2014.pdf)

***The Geography of Foreign Students in U.S. Higher Education: Origins and Destinations***, Brookings Institute, August 2014

Using a new database on foreign student visa approvals from 2001–2012, this report analyzes visa distribution in the U.S. Findings demonstrate that foreign students disproportionately study STEM and business fields and extend their visas to work. These graduates often fill employment opportunities in large diversified economies, like New York or Los Angeles, or specialized labor markets, such as Honolulu, Seattle, or Las Vegas. Because most foreign students come from large fast-growing cities in emerging markets, another economic benefit to their U.S. regions is the connection to their cities of origin. The number of foreign students at U.S. colleges and universities grew dramatically from 2001–2012 and are

concentrated in metropolitan areas. This report recommends capitalizing on foreign students' knowledge and relationships to strengthen regional economies and support their educational and professional experiences in the U.S.

[www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2014/08/foreign-students/foreign\\_students\\_final.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2014/08/foreign-students/foreign_students_final.pdf)

## Data

***Moving the Goalposts: How Demand for a Bachelor's Degree Is Reshaping the Workforce***, Burning Glass, September 2014

This report explores a recent trend among employers toward setting higher workforce credential requirements for jobs that formerly required less postsecondary education. Looking across a broad range of occupations, findings suggest a significant shift to middle-skills jobs in certain occupational categories, including entry level IT. Depending upon the specific occupation, employers may have become more selective or favor more educated workers or may require workers with new and more complex skills, or both. Findings also suggest that credential inflation is less likely in jobs that demonstrate sufficient alternatives for identifying skill proficiency, such as in healthcare and engineering technician jobs where strict licensing and certification standards serve to confirm capability.

[www.burning-glass.com/media/4737/Moving\\_the\\_Goalposts.pdf](http://www.burning-glass.com/media/4737/Moving_the_Goalposts.pdf)

***Education at a Glance 2014: OECD Indicators***, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, September 2014

Providing data on the structure, finances, and performance of education systems in 34 member countries, plus a number of partner countries, this report presents a comparative look at the state of education around the world. Findings suggest that around 84 percent of today's youth will complete secondary education. However, educational attainment by gender has shifted in most countries; now more women are likely to complete secondary education than men. Close to 40 percent of 25–34-year olds now also have some postsecondary education, outpacing the previous generation and many older workers. Individuals achieving secondary education attainment or higher are likely to earn twice as much as the median worker. This year's report also includes data from the 2012 Survey of Adult Skills on attainment, employment, mobility, earnings, and social outcomes related to skills proficiency.

[www.oecd.org/edu/Education-at-a-Glance-2014.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/edu/Education-at-a-Glance-2014.pdf)

***Leaders & Laggards: A State-by-State Report Card on K–12 Educational Effectiveness***, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, September 2014

A comparative look at educational effectiveness across states, this report presents actionable data to help state policy makers develop effective strategies to improve education and produce more consistent outcomes. Since 2007, this analysis of national statistics and available rankings of state policies has begun to demonstrate wide variation in state educational standards. Some states stood apart as national leaders while others revealed the low-quality and inconsistent standards that led to the development of the common core standards. Findings also include the first measurement of return on investment, better indicators of education technology policy and a state's attention to proper longitudinal data systems. The 2014 report adds new measures including parental choice, international competitiveness, technology policy, and fiscal responsibility.

[www.leadersandlaggards.org/sites/default/files/Leaders%20and%20Laggards%20A%20State-by-State%20Report%20Card%20on%20K-12%20Educational%20Effectiveness.pdf](http://www.leadersandlaggards.org/sites/default/files/Leaders%20and%20Laggards%20A%20State-by-State%20Report%20Card%20on%20K-12%20Educational%20Effectiveness.pdf)

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***Enterprising States 2014: Re-creating Equality of Opportunity***, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, July 2014

Presenting the findings from an annual analysis of best practices for state job creation, this report is organized by five fundamental policy topics: talent pipeline, exports and international trade, technology and entrepreneurship, business climate, and infrastructure. A performance index is used to identify the top 10 state performers in each policy area and compare states using 33 metrics that measure overall economic performance. States are grouped by region, and metrics are grouped by policy area for visual comparison. A heat map displays state-by-state performance and indicates regional strength in each key policy area. Read vertically, strength or weakness in individual state or regional performance across key policy areas becomes readily apparent. Comparison of multiple states' performance in a specific metric can be read horizontally. Individual state profiles offer further insight into strategies and initiatives that support performance and rankings by performance metric.

[www.uschamberfoundation.org/sites/default/files/legacy/foundation/Enterprising%20States%202014\\_0.pdf](http://www.uschamberfoundation.org/sites/default/files/legacy/foundation/Enterprising%20States%202014_0.pdf)

***Middle-Skill Spotlight: An Analysis of Four In-Demand Sectors with a Community College Focus***, EMSI, July 2014

With increasing emphasis on regional growth strategies and development of workforce skills relevant to job growth, community colleges play a critical role in addressing the local and regional training needs of employers and often in developing short-term or accelerated training programs. Community college effectiveness relies on accurate information about the labor market: the industries that are most important to the regional economy, the occupations that are growing, and the worker skills that drive productivity for the employers. This report focuses on middle-skill occupations that many community and technical colleges supply with skilled workers. It provides data on the highest paying middle skill occupations and in-demand sectors for middle-skill workforce needs, and then profiles four high-growth occupational sectors highlighting high-growth metropolitan areas. Texas demonstrates growth in all of the sectors presented.

[www.economicmodeling.com/wp-content/uploads/ccreport-2014\\_web1.pdf](http://www.economicmodeling.com/wp-content/uploads/ccreport-2014_web1.pdf)

## Disabilities

***A Review of Community College-Employer Partnerships and Initiatives: Expanding Opportunities for Job Seekers with Disabilities***, Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, September 2014

Because more than half of students with disabilities attend community colleges for their postsecondary education, this report identifies six primary types of community college partnerships with employers and explores whether people with disabilities have been considered in the efforts. Differentiated by the sponsor and approach, models include partnerships facilitated by non-employer partners, such as: a regional workforce intermediary or community-based organization, sectoral partnerships across multiple employers and colleges, individual partnerships with deep employer engagement, and career pathways. Findings highlight several common characteristics, particularly how partnerships establish processes to identify employer and regional labor market needs, develop new courses or modify curricula to meet skill requirements, share or seek external funding, and track program outcomes. While none of the primary initiatives reviewed specifically targeted individuals with disabilities, some isolated practices were identified.

[www.heldrich.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/products/uploads/AskEARN-CollegeEmployerPartnerships.pdf](http://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/products/uploads/AskEARN-CollegeEmployerPartnerships.pdf)

## Supply Demand

***Still Searching: Job Vacancies and STEM Skills***, Metropolitan Policy Program, Brookings Institute, July 2014

Analyzing the skill requirements and duration of advertised job postings—a measure of hiring difficulty—this report provides further insight into STEM skill shortages. A large sample size of 3.3 million advertisements across 52,000 companies supported analysis of all job vacancies posted on company websites in 2013 and across every metropolitan area. It considered the local labor market, the value of specific STEM skills required to perform the job, and the company managing the recruiting. The study also explored trends in hiring difficulties by skill, education, and occupation. Findings suggest that the severity of the shortage of STEM skills has returned to pre-Recession levels and is particularly acute in specific regions. STEM positions take longer to fill, and specific high value STEM skills are particularly difficult to fill. Duration of the postings allows for comparison of hiring difficulties associated with distinct skills. For example, there were 80 such skills related to engineering occupations and 20 related to science occupations. By comparison, intellectual property is the single, STEM-intensive skill common to legal professions that demonstrates occupational demand and a limited workforce supply. This study is further able to pinpoint the value of distinct skills and duration of vacancy. Regional demand is mapped by median duration.

[www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2014/07/stem/job-vacancies-and-stem-skills.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2014/07/stem/job-vacancies-and-stem-skills.pdf)

***How Many More Skilled Workers Do We Need? Using Supply and Demand Reports for State Workforce Planning***, National Skills Coalition, June 2014

To help policy makers address concerns about shortages of workers with appropriate skills to meet the needs of industry, this paper provides a method that states can use to measure the gap between workforce supply and employment demand. It focuses on the demand in middle-skill jobs and the number of newly trained workers. Examples from several states that provide this type of information are included and provide steps to produce supply and demand reports.

[www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/file/how-many-more-skilled-workers.pdf](http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/file/how-many-more-skilled-workers.pdf)

## Training

***Why Data, Social, and Mobile Are Prioritizing Communications Skills in More Occupations***, College for America, August 2014

Highlighting the growing use of mobile technology and social media across occupations and the culture, this occupational trend report describes the increasing demand for advanced communications skills. It profiles six people-centric occupations in which these skills are fast becoming critical to their organizations. Skills that are becoming normalized in occupations such as human resources, marketing, and training and development include: communicating with peers; establishing interpersonal relationships; researching and analyzing information; problem solving, decision making, and thinking creatively.

[go.collegeforamerica.org/communications-trend-report](http://go.collegeforamerica.org/communications-trend-report)