



Texas Workforce Investment Council

Policy News Highlights

Issue 32, Quarter 4, December 2015

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 10 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, 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

Renewing the Promise of the Higher Education November 2015, New America, November 2015

The Higher Education Act, passed in 1965, has provided opportunities to many students who may have otherwise been unable to afford college. However, since its passage, the economy and society have changed greatly. Specifically, postsecondary education has become the new minimum, and by the year 2022, it's estimated that two-thirds of all new jobs will require some form of postsecondary education and training beyond high school, but not necessarily a four-year degree. This includes jobs requiring associates degrees, apprenticeship, certificates, and other industry-recognized credentials. As traditional concepts of the needs of postsecondary students evolve, the transition from school to work has become more difficult. The challenges are exacerbated by the cost of college, which has risen dramatically. This brief explains how the education system can better serve a broad and more diverse group of students in order to prepare them for a changing economy.

www.businessroundtable.org/sites/default/files/news-releases/HEA11.2.pdf

Apprenticeship

Proposal 7: Expanding Apprenticeship Opportunities in the United States, The Hamilton Project, November 2015

Apprenticeship is a training system that produces a highly cost-effective mechanism to prepare skilled workers and reduce youth unemployment. Apprenticeship training is effective not only because it upgrades skills, raises wages, and increases productivity, but apprenticeships provide positive returns for both employers and workers using limited federal resources. While apprenticeships can result in positive outcomes, there are challenges. Apprentices today make up only two-tenths of a percent of the United States labor force. Many employers are unaware of apprenticeship programs. New approaches in the expansion of apprenticeship programs include developing high-level and firm-based marketing initiatives, building on youth apprenticeship programs, extending the use of current postsecondary and training subsidies to apprenticeship, designating best practice occupational standards for apprenticeships, and developing a solid infrastructure of information, peer support, and research.

www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2014/06/19_hamilton_policies_addressing_poverty/expand_apprenticeships_united_states_lerman.pdf

The United Services Military Apprenticeship Program: Implementation Study and Feasibility of an Impact Study, The Urban Institute, November 2015

Between 2011 and 2016, more than one million veterans will leave the military and begin civilian life. Military personnel can potentially bridge the gap between military experience and civilian job requirements by gaining valuable credentials through military apprenticeships that are recognized by civilian employers. The Office of Apprenticeship with the U.S. Department of Labor oversees the occupational training with the registered apprenticeship system from the United Services Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP). The USMAP registers various occupational programs partly by submitting work processes that describe the skills apprentices will learn on and off the jobs. Documenting the work processes helps translate the skills learned in the military into a civilian context. USMAP can help service members make successful transitions to civilian careers by increasing skills that are commonly required for civilian occupations.

[www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/completed-studies/The_United_Services_Military_Apprenticeship_Program_\(USMAP\).pdf](http://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/completed-studies/The_United_Services_Military_Apprenticeship_Program_(USMAP).pdf)

Career and College Readiness

Flipping the Paradigm: Why We Need Training-Based Pathways to the Bachelor's Degree and How to Build Them, New America, November 2015

This research paper explains challenges in the education system for students who need to begin their careers before completing a four-year degree. While students can find secondary education programs that will train them for specific occupations, transferring that learning toward a bachelor's degree is difficult. Without a bachelor's degree, these workers can struggle to advance in their careers. Several states and educational institutions have developed pathways to four-year degrees that begin with a career training program. Some programs include putting two years of general education on top of two years of technical training. Other programs have developed a new applied bachelor's degree that enables students to build on and broaden technical expertise. This research examines how our education system needs to rethink and redevelop how students can most effectively and efficiently apply credit for prior learning toward a bachelor's degree.

[//static.newamerica.org/attachments/11652-flipping-the-paradigm/Flipping-the-Paradigm.Of26409a95ec4052987af5d3084d477f.pdf](http://static.newamerica.org/attachments/11652-flipping-the-paradigm/Flipping-the-Paradigm.Of26409a95ec4052987af5d3084d477f.pdf)

Learning While Earning: The New Normal, Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, November 2015

For decades the definition of the traditional college student has been the full-time student who attends a four-year university directly out of high school. Those students remain but are now outnumbered by working students who balance attending college and earning a paycheck. This report examines individuals who work while attending some type of postsecondary institution. Findings include: 1) more students are working and working full-time while in college; 2) going to college and working simultaneously results in higher success rates than going straight to work after high school; 3) one-third of working learners are 30 years of age or older; and 4) students are taking out more loans to pay for college. However, findings also reveal that working while attending college hurts disadvantaged students. To prosper in the labor market, working learners need effective advising to pursue the most effective postsecondary career pathway.

[//cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Working-Learners-Report.pdf](http://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Working-Learners-Report.pdf)

Locked Out: Improving Educational and Vocational Outcomes for Incarcerated Youth, The Council of State Governments Justice Center, November 2015

Incarcerated youth are in great need of access to quality education and experience to address barriers to competency and completion. While the data is limited, studies show that at least one in three incarcerated youth is identified as needing special education services. More than half have reading and math skills significantly below their grade level, and approximately 60 percent have repeated a grade. A 2015 electronic survey of all state juvenile correctional agencies revealed that the majority of incarcerated youth do not have access to the same educational and vocational services or the same curriculum and performance requirements as traditional public schools. Most states do not collect or report student outcomes for incarcerated youth. The policies and practices employed during incarceration make it challenging for youth to effectively transition to community-based educational or vocational settings once released. Recommendations include requiring facility schools to provide the same educational and vocational services as traditional public schools; to receive national accreditation for education programs; and to track and analyze data on key student outcome indicators. Lastly, the author suggests that states designate a single agency to ensure that youth successfully transition to a community-based educational or vocational setting after being released.

[//csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/LOCKED_OUT_Improving_Educational_and_Vocational_Outcomes_for_Incarcerated_Youth.pdf](http://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/LOCKED_OUT_Improving_Educational_and_Vocational_Outcomes_for_Incarcerated_Youth.pdf)

Career Pathways Initiatives, College & Career Readiness & Success, September 2015

The Perkins Act of 2006 provides states with federal funding for education. In order to receive these funds, states must create career and technical education programs of study or career pathways that prepare students to make successful transitions into education and the workforce. Several states have designed and implemented multiple career pathways that align career courses with education and workforce efforts and implement common definitions and measures. The Advanced Career Pathways model is designed to allow students to take integrated courses by sequence during high school. The courses are designed for students to meet college and career readiness standards. Students leave prepared for an entry-level job in the career area or for further education without a need for remediation. The course sequence includes two foundational courses and two advanced courses. The objective is for the courses developed in one state to be transferrable to another state.

www.ccrscenter.org/sites/default/files/AskCCRS_CareerPathways.pdf

The Impact of Co-locating American Job Centers on Community College Campuses in North Carolina, The Center for Analysis of Postsecondary Education and Employment, September 2015

Community colleges are critical to workforce development for the array of programs offered that prepare individuals for jobs and for the established partnerships that provide ongoing support within the workforce system. This research report examined the co-location of job centers on community college campuses. The objective of co-locating a job center on a community college campus is to provide students with job search, career counseling, and job placement services in hopes of helping to improve student outcomes, particularly with employment and earnings. However, based on this analysis, the presence of job centers on college campuses appears to have little effect on the student outcomes. [//ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/capsee-american-job-centers.pdf](http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/capsee-american-job-centers.pdf)

The Condition of STEM 2015, National ACT, July 2015

This National ACT report reviews various aspects of the ACT-tested 2015 graduating class, including an interest inventory that allows analysis in the context of science, technology, engineering, and math, all STEM-related fields. This report explains that of the 1.9 million graduates who took the ACT, 49 percent are interested in STEM majors or careers. While five-year trends have increased by two percent in computer science and mathematics majors, the medical and health majors have seen a three percent decrease. Students are measured against a rigorous entry-level college course ACT STEM college readiness benchmark. Forty-nine percent of students who meet the STEM benchmark have a chance of attaining a STEM degree. Only 17 percent of students fall below the benchmark. The students who expressed interest in STEM outperformed their peers in college readiness. The report points out that while students may not be able to articulate interest in STEM early on in their academic study, an introduction to STEM majors and occupations at an early age supports college readiness as well as interest in STEM.

www.act.org/stemcondition/15/pdf/National-STEM-Report-2015.pdf

Career and Technical Education

Building A Strong Relationship Between Competency-Based Pathways and Career Technical Education, Achieve, November 2015

The nation is shifting away from the standard K-12 education model where students follow an annual progression of grade level courses and graduate from high school prepared for college and careers. Several states are exploring a competency-based pathway, also known as a student-centered approach, where students progress based on proficiency demonstrated in the content area versus an established standard of classroom hours. This brief explains how using competency-based elements from career technical education can help integrate the competency-based pathway. This integration would provide new ways for students to demonstrate mastery of college and career ready standards and competencies. Integration leverage points include: contextualized learning, self-directed pathways, experiential learning opportunities, project-based learning, and CBP assessment systems.

www.achieve.org/files/AchieveCBPCTEConnections.pdf

Attracting the Next Generation Workforce, The Role of Career and Technical Education, Manufacturing Institute, Educational Research Center of America, and Skills USA, October 2015

This report discusses the findings of a survey produced to help identify a variety of characteristics that influence student career choices. Intended to inspire dialogue between parents, educators, counselors, and students, the goal of the survey is to better align the needs and experiences of students in preparation for careers. A large number of students identified personal experiences as having the greatest influence on their career decisions. For example, many students experience manufacturing and gain familiarity with industry through a career and technical student organization. The organization

provides a hands-on, project-based learning opportunity in a technical field, and often teams from regional and state schools participate in competitions. This survey found that 31 percent of students enrolled in career and technical education courses participate in these activities, and students engaged in this type of organization are nearly 50 percent more likely to pursue a technical career.

www.themanufacturinginstitute.org/~media/313BCA4C3721444CA8C48F7304F32027.ashx

Clusters and Sector Strategies

Managing the Talent Pipeline: A New Approach to Closing the Skills Gap, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, November 2015

As the workforce and education systems face challenges to keep up with the changing needs of the economy and employers struggle to find skilled workers, this report discusses a new vision for employer engagement using talent pipeline management. This approach helps employers apply lessons learned from supply chain management to close the skills gap. Talent pipelines drive a competitive advantage, build collaborative networks that create shared value, and align end-to-end performance and incentives. This type of practice positions the employer as the end customer. This type of practice also forges new relationships between employers, educators, and workforce providers that produce better outcomes for students.

www.uschamberfoundation.org/sites/default/files/Managing%20the%20Talent%20Pipeline.pdf

Minding the Gap: Investing in a Skilled Manufacturing Workforce, Jobs for the Future, November 2015

According to this report, the skills gap is more apparent within the manufacturing sector. The manufacturing sector is in need of responsible and ready-to-work individuals with strong reading and math skills trained to work as machinists, welders, and maintenance technicians. While graduation rates and college enrollments are at their highest, the skills gap still remains. Industries, workforce agencies, and educators are collaborating and developing solutions to address worker shortages, but not at the scale to meet the demand. Issues and challenges in the manufacturing industry include an aging workforce, the growing demand for higher skills, and the need for stronger partnerships across business, education, and workforce agencies. This report finds that the best way to fill the manufacturing pipeline includes exposing high school students to employers, partnering with community colleges, building business talent, and providing career advancement opportunities within manufacturing businesses.

www.jff.org/sites/default/files/publications/materials/Manufacturing-Summit-092915.pdf

Work and Learn in Action: Successful Strategies for Employers, National Network: Connecting, Learning, and Work, November 2015

Hands-on work opportunities help students make a connection between what they learn in school and what they need to learn to be successful in their careers. Jobs today require workers to have more technical skills. Workers must have the ability to be responsive to the changing expectations and skill requirements of the occupation. The demographics of workers are also changing, and generations X and Y are increasingly filling leadership roles. But more critically, the rapid changes in technology are driving workers to update and acquire new skills. The work-and-learn program partnerships provide real-world experience on the job while in training. The work-and-learn program connects theory-based classroom instruction with career development and work experience. This approach allows businesses to implement work-and-learn models to address specific workforce needs while building a pipeline for the future. The workers gain and exhibit the hands-on competencies and other common employability skills required for workplace attainment.

www.nationalnetwork.org/walguidebook.pdf

Initial Report on Skills, Talents and Employment Opportunities: Texas' Water and Water Technology Cluster, AccelerateH2O Texas Water Technology Accelerator, October 2015

Funded through the Texas Workforce Commission under a Wagner-Peyser federal grant and in partnership with Alamo Colleges of Greater San Antonio, AccelerateH2O has conducted an initial data collection, assessment, and a general analysis of employment, occupation, and skills scenarios for the water and water technology sector. Texas has approximately 1.4 million workers employed in water-related industries. This level of employment places water and water technology among the top five economic and workforce clusters in Texas. AccelerateH2O captured data at a micro-level on businesses and institutions and began live mapping of academic, industry, utility, and related sub-sector localized clusters. Occupations run the gamut in terms of the educational attainment required, from high-school graduates in operator certified positions to post-graduate PhDs and engineers with masters.

www.texasedc.org/sites/default/files/files/Newsletters/AccelerateH2O%20Report.pdf

Data

Mastering the Blueprint: State Progress on Workforce Data, Workforce Data Quality Campaign, November 2015

The Workforce Data Quality Campaign (WDQC), a broad coalition of national organizations, state leaders, and technical experts, developed a 13-point state blueprint identifying key features of a data system featuring aligned, inclusive, and market-relevant state data. In order to gauge each states' progress against the blueprint, WDQC surveyed all 50 states. The elements of the WDQC blueprint consist of including all students and pathways; counting industry-recognized credentials; assessing employment outcomes; expanding the use of labor market information; and ensuring data access and appropriate use. Crucial discoveries include that 41 states are building cross-agency councils to oversee statewide data collection and reporting. Forty-two states have improved data collection, analysis, and dissemination, and 36 states surveyed share employment data with other states though the data are limited.

www.workforcedqc.org/sites/default/files/images/11%2019%20NSCblueprint_FNL.pdf

Workforce Information Council Skills Initiative, LMI Institute, November 2015

The Workforce Information Council's Skills Initiative created a study group to engage various stakeholders in a dialogue around skills and meeting employer demands. The new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act requires data-driven decisions around skills and workplace readiness; however, there is little guidance on the definition of skills. This summary report examines the broad definition of soft skills and hard skills and considers goals when creating a useful data set, including: creating a common language for skills; obtaining the most effective ways to train local workers for top occupations in an area; and encouraging an inclusive workforce intelligence system. The authors recommend establishing a formal structure around the concept to benefit the labor market information community.

www.lmiontheweb.org/download/2015-11/WIC_Skills_Initiative_Summary_Report_-_November_2015.pdf

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act: Performance Reporting and Related Challenges, U.S. Government Accountability Office, November 2015

In July 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act brought changes to the nation's employment and training system. The WIOA requires the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Education to collaborate and develop a common performance accountability system for

six core programs that include Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, the Wagner-Peyser Employment Services programs, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services programs. The issues addressed in this report include previously reported and anticipated challenges for performance reporting and how federal and state agencies are currently reporting on Workforce Investment Act performance measures for core job training programs.

www.gao.gov/assets/680/672690.pdf

Using Post-College Labor Market Outcomes: Policy Challenges and Choices, CLASP, October 2015

This report discusses the growing need for more data on former students' labor market outcomes, such as post-college employment and earnings. For the first time, the U.S. Department of Education's college scorecard includes median earnings for former students from specific institutions. Additionally, an increasing number of states have websites that display the earnings and outcomes of students who complete particular programs and degree levels. On the policy side, federal legislation has been introduced that would track student-level data including employment and earnings. As this student-level data becomes more available, lawmakers may be tempted to hold institutions accountable for the results at either the state level through outcome-based funding or at the federal level. This report provides recommendations from education practitioners that policymakers should consider before using labor market outcomes data for accountability purposes.

www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/publication-1/Using-Post-College-Labor-Market-Outcomes.pdf

Engaging Employers in Workforce Data, Workforce Data Quality Campaign, August 2015

For two years, the Workforce Data Quality Campaign worked at engaging stakeholders to create, maintain, and use data systems designed to help businesses, workers, educators, and students make better decisions in relation to career choices, education, and training opportunities. Quality data can be used to determine education pipelines, credentials, and career pathways, as well as where skills gaps exist or if they may emerge. Mississippi and Alabama are two states where employers have taken the lead in data governance. Mississippi Life Tracks, the state's data system, began in 1999. The system has proven to be fundamental to the state's efforts in working with employers and creating an economic development engine. Alabama's system is still in the works. While it would not require additional data, the newly implemented system would connect existing data to evaluate education and workforce trends.

www.workforcedqc.org/sites/default/files/files/WDQC_EmployerEngagement.pdf

Disabilities

One Size Does Not Fit All: A New Look at the Labor Force Participation of People with Disabilities, American Institutes for Research, September 2015

Beginning in the 1970s, policy makers transitioned the objectives of policy for people with disabilities from income support to policies designed to promote labor participation and employment. Some of these policy reforms included the Workforce Investment Act, the Ticket to Work Incentive, The Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008, and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014. Millions of disabled working-age adults are willing to work but do not have jobs or count as being unemployed. Thirty-two percent of individuals not looking for a job and therefore not included in unemployment figures are reported as being disabled. The number of individuals with disabilities in the workforce has dropped from 25 percent in 2001 to 16 percent in 2014. Several states have introduced the federal initiative Employment First to implement policies and programs designed to

improve the workforce system and increase participation and employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The objective is to remove any barriers to employment and be able to provide safeguards and incentives that meet the needs of the workforce and this population.

www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Labor-Force-Participation-People-with-Disabilities-Yin-Sept-2015.pdf

Supply Demand

Sector Partnership Policy Toolkit, National Skills Coalition, October 2015

The National Skills Coalition (NSC) developed a toolkit to help states develop policies that will support local sector partnerships. These partnerships include employers with education and training providers, labor, community-based organizations, and others to address industry skill needs. Sector partnerships are a requirement of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, and the NSC believes the partnerships should be promoted as a key component of a state's workforce development system. The toolkit developed by NSC provides a guide on key elements for state sector partnership policies, a legislative template for a state sector partnership policy, and case studies on policies in Colorado, Maryland, and Massachusetts.

www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/file/Final-Sector-Partnership-Policy-Toolkit-1.pdf