



Texas Workforce Investment Council

Policy News Highlights

Issue 34, Quarter 2, June 2016

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

Trends in Community College Enrollment and Completion Data, American Association of Community Colleges, March 2016

Each year the U.S. Department of Education and the National Student Clearinghouse publish reports on higher education that illustrate trends in fall enrollment as well as student outcomes. Recent years show a nationwide decline in community college enrollment among older students. The report shares that, according to the National Student Clearinghouse, more than 38 percent of community college students earn a credential, while the Department of Education's official graduation rate is 22 percent. The report discusses the trends in community college enrollment, the discrepancy between student completion rates versus graduation rates, and the impact of changes in student enrollment on completion rates. www.aacc.nche.edu/Publications/Reports/Documents/Trends_CC_Enrollment_Final2016.pdf

Career and College Readiness

How States are Making Career Readiness Count: A 2016 Update, Achieve and Advance CTE, May 2016

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act was reauthorized and signed into law as the Every Student Succeeds Act in December 2015. The piece of legislation requires states to redesign their accountability systems. The act also provides a number of key provisions related to career readiness. States now have the local flexibility to promote continuous improvement; influence decisions about resource allocations;

create, interpret, and advise on policies; and capture progress made. This paper provides a status update on the use of career-readiness indicators in public reporting and accountability systems, including highlights from several states that are currently in the midst of the transition. It also describes indicators that states use for public reporting and accountability systems.

www.achieve.org/files/CareerReadiness2016.pdf

A Stronger Nation: 2016 Postsecondary Learning Builds the Talent that Helps Us Rise, Lumina Foundation, April 2016

This report, released each year by the Lumina Foundation, tracks the nation's progress toward Goal 2025, which focuses on increasing the proportion of Americans with degrees, certificates, and other credentials to 60 percent by 2025. In 2014, it was reported that 40 percent of the working population age 25–64 have at least a two-year or four-year degree. The report includes data on the attainment of postsecondary certificates and indicates that 4.9 percent of Americans hold a postsecondary certificate as their highest credential. The report includes additional demographic and geographic breakdowns of current degree and certificate attainment rates at the state level, as well as for select metro areas. According to the report, the current rate of growth is not sufficient to achieve Goal 2025, and the U.S. is projected to fall short of that number by 10.9 million people if the pace continues unchanged.

www.luminafoundation.org/files/publications/stronger_nation/2016/A_Stronger_Nation-2016-Full.pdf

A Case in Micro-Credentialing, Interstate Renewable Energy Council, March 2016

This case study explains that rapid growth in the clean energy sector has created exciting yet daunting challenges for employers, employees, and the workforce development infrastructure. While certifications have been proven to support this industry, certifications alone are not always meeting the needs of employers. Micro-credentialing is defined as demonstrating competency in specific knowledge and skills that do not typically cover a full job requirement. While the employee may or may not be in the core profession, a portion of their job may call for a specific set of knowledge and skills associated with that core profession. According to the study, clean energy micro-credentials could cover skill areas such as energy storage, energy management, operations and maintenance, and data acquisition. The case study explains that micro-credentialing in clean energy repeats the successful development of other career pathway models that offer integrated, advanced steps to jobs and training.

www.nationalnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/MicroCredential-Case-Study-FINAL-March-2016.pdf

Communicating the Value of Competencies, American Council on Education, March 2016

This paper provides information on the importance of competencies for higher education institutions, students, and employers. Communicating competencies is targeted at higher education decision-makers in an effort to re-examine how current competencies are articulated within the definitions of credentials, the structure of the curriculum, and the evidence of learning by the students. The paper defines key terms, problems that stakeholders currently encounter, and questions that encourage discussion and create potential solutions that address these problems. Recommendations are provided to highlight ideas to educational institutions that may make sense for their students, including examining programs in terms of the competencies included; working with career services to help students showcase their specific competencies; and organizing a summit on the value of competencies with local stakeholders.

www.acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/Communicating-the-Value-of-Competencies.pdf

MDRC Research on Career Pathways, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, March 2016

As postsecondary credentials become increasingly important to access higher quality employment opportunities, a number of education and workforce programs are applying career pathway approaches to help individuals prepare for higher education and for better jobs. This brief explains that, while the definitions vary in their particulars, career pathways share elements that include a sequence of educational programs that lead to credentials, multiple entry and exit points, careers and employer engagement, and support services that promote student progress and completion. The paper further explains that career pathway models and approaches may look different depending on the target population, sector focus, type and location of educational and employer institutions, and state policies.

www.mdrc.org/publication/mdrc-research-career-pathways/file-full

Quality Dimensions for Connected Credentials, American Council on Education, March 2016

This paper provides context for understanding the value of connected credentials in order to help higher education decision-makers analyze the link between credentials, credit for prior learning, and career pathways. Definitions of credentials, problems that stakeholders currently encounter, and challenge questions are included to stimulate discussion and visualize potential futures for enhancing the quality of connected credentials. Six dimensions of quality—transparency, modularity, portability, relevance, validity, and equity—that support connected credentials are highlighted. Ideas to improve the quality of postsecondary systems include creating a work group with higher education institutions to review and implement connected credentials among traditional partners; analyzing how one credential can connect to complementary credentials such as a licensure or certifications; and forming new or strengthening existing partnerships with employers.

www.acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/Quality-Dimensions-for-Connected-Credentials.pdf

Tracking Transfer: New Measures of Institutional and State Effectiveness in Helping Community College Students Attain Bachelor's Degrees, The Aspen Institute, Community College Research Center, and the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, January 2016

This research analyzes five common measures at institutions that are effectively serving transfer students. Three measures for community colleges help determine trends such as the rate at which students transfer to four-year institutions, transfer with a credential, and complete a bachelor's degree. Additional measures examine the overall rate of students who start at a community college and earn a bachelor's degree from a four-year institution. Transfer students at four-year public institutions and institutions with higher socioeconomic status experienced better outcomes. Lower income transfer students experienced lower performance outcomes than higher income students on almost all measures. The paper points out that students transferring from community colleges to four-year institutions are more likely to be from lower income families than students who enter higher education through four-year institutions. Furthermore, findings suggest that only a small percentage who transfer earn a bachelor's degree. www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/tracking-transfer-institutional-state-effectiveness.pdf

The Value of Credentials for Disadvantaged Workers, The Aspen Institute, March 2015

Increasingly, attainment of a postsecondary credential is considered a prerequisite to gaining a quality job. Given an increased focus on training and preparing workers to obtain postsecondary credentials, job seekers and workers who must invest time and money to obtain such credentials still question the value of these credentials on improving their employment earnings outcomes. This paper explores whether individuals who obtain credentials work and earn more over time than individuals without such credentials. The impact on earnings for low-income job seekers is also examined. Key findings suggest

that well-designed, sector-focused training programs significantly benefit low-income workers and that obtaining credentials from a well-regarded institution improves the earnings of low-income job-seekers. www.aspenwsi.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Value-of-Credentials.pdf

Career and Technical Education

Putting Learner Success First: A Shared Vision for the Future of CTE, Advance Career Technical Education, May 2016

This brief examines a concept for career technical education, which calls for a systemic transformation of the education system by transforming career technical education into a system that will prepare all students for a lifetime of future success working in high-demand, high-skill occupations. It provides a vision that includes guiding principles and action steps that will support learners; standards of excellence for all career technical education programs; and personalized and flexible learning activities taught by knowledgeable experts.

www.careertech.org/sites/default/files/Vision_FinalWeb.pdf

Clusters and Sector Strategies

Exploring Middle-Skill Training Programs for Employment in the Retail Industry, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, April 2016

The retail industry accounts for approximately 10 percent of the nation's jobs and is projected to increase by seven percent by 2022. The size of the industry affords a large number of employment opportunities for low-skilled workers to explore the retail sector as a ladder to middle-skill and middle-income jobs. This paper reviews a survey that was conducted to help understand the national experience of workforce training providers that prepare low-skilled individuals for middle-skill jobs in the retail industry. Findings indicate that few workforce training programs actually focus on middle-skill jobs in retail. While opportunities do exist, the retail industry and employers must work together to develop training programs. Retail stores often train within rather than externally; however, the survey suggests that training providers would embrace information about available job opportunities, high-growth occupations, and career paths in retail. Increasing communication, implementing new partnership models, and trying new approaches to expand training could encourage providers to commit more resources to prepare workers for careers in the retail industry.

www.mdrc.org/publication/exploring-middle-skill-training-programs-employment-retail-industry/full

Pathways to Equity: Narrowing the Wage Gap by Improving Women's Access to Good Middle-Skill Jobs, JPMorgan Chase & Co, March 2016

This article addresses women's access to well-paid, growing, middle-skill jobs. It points out continuing segregation between men and women in middle-skill jobs and recommends gender integration to reduce both skills deficiencies and improve women's financial security. The report focuses on middle-skill occupations in manufacturing; information technology; and transportation, distribution, and logistics that have high projected job openings yet typically employ few women. Lower paid middle-skill jobs that predominately employ female workers can serve as career pathways for women seeking to

improve their earnings. Additional information and a full list of growing middle-skill occupations with potential employment opportunities for women is provided in the article.

www.jpmorganchase.com/corporate/Corporate-Responsibility/document/womens-wage-gap-middle-skills-jobs.pdf

Tech Jobs for All?, JPMorgan Chase & Co, March 2016

Training programs that promise high-paying technology jobs are proliferating and drawing attention from government leaders and the general public. The rapid growth of these training models is designed to fill the projected growth in information and technology jobs. This report examines the reasons for the increase in these training programs and identifies best practices from each program type. The report also identifies challenges that organizations, employers, and the government will need to address to ensure that these expanding programs accurately meet market demand.

www.jpmorganchase.com/corporate/Corporate-Responsibility/document/JPMC-tech-training-report-web.pdf

Competitiveness

Empowering Adults to Thrive at Work: Personal Success Skills for 21st Century Jobs A Report on Promising Research and Practice, SRI Education A Division of SRI International, March 2016

This report is intended for education leaders, workforce development specialists, and human services caseworkers interested in helping and empowering individuals to build sustainable careers. The report defines personal success skills as the foundational capacities that all adults need to thrive in the workforce. It notes that beyond technical and disciplinary knowledge, a multi-pronged approach that includes strengthening personal success skills can increase an individual's ability to get a good job. The report also discusses a variety of research-based practices, tools, technologies, and approaches to help adults build their personal success skills. Some approaches may take extensive time to achieve, such as new problem-solving capacities, while other approaches are less about direct training and more about structuring work environments to support positive growth and development.

www.sri.com/sites/default/files/publications/joyceempoweringadultstothriveatwork_4.pdf

Data

Assessing and Improving State Postsecondary Data Systems, State Higher Education Executive Officers Association and Complete College America, May 2016

This paper reviews the state postsecondary student unit record systems. These record systems are responsible for analyzing student progress and outcomes at the state level. Record systems are also responsible for presenting higher education data for decision makers. The demand for accurate and comprehensive postsecondary data has increased since these systems were developed. Major issues noted include gaps in the data, privacy concerns, and lack of resources. Recommendations include expanding the use of state record systems, addressing privacy and security concerns, investing in the state record systems, and adopting best practices from other states. The paper further discusses allowing state-level record systems access to federal datasets and continuing the funding for state data systems.

www.shceo.org/sites/default/files/state_postsecondary_data_systems.pdf

Classroom to Career: Leveraging Employment Data to Measure Labor Market Outcomes, Workforce Data Quality Campaign, May 2016

This paper discusses how post-college labor market outcomes are critical to helping students in making decisions about education and careers. Post-college labor market information also reflects if postsecondary institutions are effectively preparing students to succeed in the job market. The author explains that an employment data infrastructure at the state and federal levels with postsecondary information is significant. These multiple datasets can provide information on employers and employees such as identifying information, which may be used in matching student records. Currently, state agencies and postsecondary institutions are able to get state wage records to measure postsecondary labor market outcomes. The paper provides policy recommendations to formalize a process for a federal match on student records and employment data and to provide federal funding for states to enhance their data systems to link to education and wage information.

www.ihep.org/sites/default/files/uploads/postsecdata/docs/resources/leveraging_employment_data_0.pdf

Fostering State-to-State Data Exchanges, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, May 2016

A number of gaps exist in the available data on higher educational institutional performance. The authors emphasize that if existing state networks were linked, states could hold postsecondary institutions accountable and measure performance, evaluate and improve policies and programs, and provide prospective students with current data on institutions. There have been substantial advancements made to address technical issues related to data sharing among the states. A combined data model was adopted by participating states that allows maximum flexibility in obtaining the data needed and incorporating data security. The goal is to have a standardized system for all the states. Recommendations for policy makers are provided to advance the concept and value of a state data exchange. These include: involving the federal government in cross-state data partnerships; providing states access to federal data systems; and requiring additional data elements for unemployment insurance wage records.

www.ihep.org/sites/default/files/uploads/postsecdata/docs/resources/fostering_state-to-state_data_exchanges.pdf

Institutional Research Capacity: Foundations of Federal Data Quality, Association for Institutional Research, May 2016

This paper reviews the collection process of state and national postsecondary data and discusses how changes could be made to the process to improve the higher education data system. The majority of postsecondary institutions have established data systems for reporting purposes, yet the variation in those systems creates vast differences in mandated reporting and in data to inform institution-level decisions. While postsecondary institutions collect data, converting those data into information remains a challenge. Policy recommendations have been made to improve state and federal data quality, including establishing a national data strategy based on a view of a single data system and establishing leadership for data capacity at all levels of the system.

www.ihep.org/sites/default/files/uploads/postsecdata/docs/resources/institutional_research_capacity.pdf

Putting the "Integrated" Back Into IPEDS: Improving the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System to Meet Contemporary Data Needs, Institute for Higher Education Policy, May 2016

This paper examines the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The authors point out that IPEDS produces the most inclusive information on more than 7,500 colleges and universities, but that the system is insufficient in its current form to answer emerging crucial questions to assist in students' college selection decisions. IPEDS is the only national system that serves students and families, policy makers, and institutions. However, because the data is collected at the institutional level, there are a few weaknesses and data is limited. There are five recommendations provided to renovate IPEDS with a more comprehensive data infrastructure: collect data on key performance indicators that fully reflect 21st century students; streamline IPEDS components to reduce institutional burden and produce more relevant data; create strategic linkages between IPEDS and other systems that already collect valuable data; create a single campus level identifier for every institution of higher education; and use IPEDS data to simplify institutional reporting on federal grants.

www.ihep.org/sites/default/files/uploads/postsecdata/docs/resources/putting_the_integrated_back_in_to_ipeds.pdf