Texas Workforce Investment Council

Policy News Highlights

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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.

The repository is divided into topic areas that correspond to priority issues supporting the Council's current strategic plan. Topics include: 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 and reports grouped according to their topic area.

Career and College Readiness

Preparing America's Labor Force: Workforce Development Programs in Public Community Colleges, The Brookings Institution, December 2016
The number of short, vocational credentials (programs requiring less than the two years of full-time study required for an associate's degree and that result in a certificate) earned by students at public community colleges more than doubled between 2000 and 2012. However, little is known about which aspects of workforce training programs are essential for student success. This policy paper utilizes interview data from multiple science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) workforce training programs at public community colleges to identify common characteristics of successful programs. Five recommendations for state policymakers and community college leaders are presented: (1) design programs to promote immediate and long-term labor market outcomes; (2) create incentives for the academic and vocational sides of community colleges to work together; (3) gather detailed program data and link it to student record data in order to evaluate new programs; (4) provide sustainable funding sources for these programs; and (5) incentivize some third-party organizations, such as local chambers of commerce, to facilitate relationships between colleges and local industry.
https://www.brookings.edu/research/preparing-americas-labor-force-workforce-development-programs-in-public-community-colleges/

Career and Technical Education

The State of Career Technical Education: Increasing Access to Industry Experts in High Schools, Advance CTE and American Institutes for Research–Center on Great Teachers & Leaders, December 2016
As interest in career and technical education continues to grow, so does the need for experts qualified to help students gain real-world experiences. Individuals with industry expertise can provide a perspective that traditional academic teachers may be unable to offer and can help students explore and experience particular career opportunities. This report examines the national shortage of industry experts in secondary classrooms and the state-level policies and programs to increase student access to them. Data from two national surveys with career and technical education groups—one of 47 state directors and one of 260 local teachers and administrators from 26 states—are used to identify common barriers and innovative strategies. The report also explores the barriers states commonly face and provides recommendations for overcoming these obstacles. While there are many alternative certification policies to bring industry experts into schools as full-time teachers, this report explores other strategies that utilize the available capacity of industry experts still working in their field, such as allowing experts to teach part time or co-teach with a fully certified teacher.
https://cte.careertech.org/sites/default/files/files/resources/State_of_CTE_Industry_Experts_2016_0.pdf

Clusters and Sector Strategies

Regional Talent Pipelines: Collaborating with Industry to Build Opportunities in Texas, Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas and Center for Public Policy Priorities, December 2016
Over the past three decades, the share of jobs that require workers to perform repetitive and procedural tasks has been shrinking in the U.S. economy, while the share of occupations that require higher and more technical skills has been growing. This form of job polarization has forced millions of American workers to make a choice: get more education and workforce training to develop the skills and build the knowledge required for new middle- and high-skill occupations; settle for a lower-wage job in a low-skill service or manual labor occupation; or drop out of the labor force. Regional workforce development systems are responding to this issue by building career pathways that create advancement opportunities for lower-skilled workers and help job seekers maximize their value in the changing labor market. For example, all local workforce boards are planning, implementing, or expanding programs to increase the number of employers offering learn-and-earn opportunities. The most popular types are transitional jobs programs, internships, apprenticeships, and summer employment opportunities for youth. Of note, the report references Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and Council efforts to provide technical support to local education and workforce partners, including the current initiative to identify a state list of industry-based certifications that can be used by schools, colleges, and training programs.
https://www.dallasfed.org/cd/EconDev/workforce/2017/pipelines

Chutes & Ladders: The New Rules of the Game for Upskilling Workers, International Economic Development Council, September 2016
Skills gaps can lead to a lack of employees and increased training costs when new employees are hired. The working-while-learning model addresses the goals of both business and workers, leading to increased productivity, workforce retention, and community well-being. Facilitating methods for existing workers to learn new skills and keep pace with technology keeps workers engaged on the job, while ensuring their ability to take on new roles and more responsibility. Types of working-while-learning programs include career fair/expo or job fair, industry tour, job shadowing, externship, pre-apprenticeship, mentorship, clinical training/practicum, returnship, on-the-job training, internship, cooperative education, apprenticeship, and

registered apprenticeship. Most successful workforce programs today are based on sector strategies—defined as partnerships between employers, training providers, community organizations, and other key stakeholders around specific industries to address the workforce needs of employers and the training, employment, and career advancement needs of workers. A best practice aligns these types of programs to build workforce pipelines for the needs of growing sectors.
http://www.iedconline.org/clientuploads/Downloads/edrp/IEDC_chutes.pdf

Competitiveness

No Recovery: An Analysis of Long-Term U.S. Productivity Decline, U.S. Council on Competitiveness, December 2016
Since the Great Recession, job growth in the U.S. has been steady. The unemployment rate has fallen from 10 percent to just under five percent, and stock prices continue to reach and surpass new highs. The report considers problems confronting the U.S., which has exhibited somewhat better performance than many of its peers on gross domestic product growth. For decades, the nation's income, measured as gross domestic product, has barely grown overall. On a per capita basis, median household income peaked in 1999; the subjective general health of Americans has declined, even when adjusted for the aging population; disability rates are higher; learning has stagnated; fewer new businesses are being launched; and more workers are involuntarily in part-time jobs or out of the labor force entirely. This report argues that deterioration in large, vital sectors of the economy is a reversible outcome that can be linked to specific policies, rules, and regulations. Reviving growth will require a new strategy that focuses on making dysfunctional markets work better for people, rather than special interest groups. The goal of regulatory reform should be to ensure rules accomplish their goals, such as preventing fraud or pollution and maintaining safety, in the most effective manner without unduly inhibiting entrepreneurship and commerce.
http://www.compete.org/storage/reports/gallup_norecovery_final_report_120516.pdf

Still Falling Short on Hours and Pay: Part-Time Work Becoming New Normal, Economic Policy Institute, December 2016
The number of people involuntarily working part time has increased by 44.6 percent since 2007. This chronically higher level of involuntary part-time workers is evidence of a structural shift in the labor market. The retail and the leisure and hospitality industries alone accounted for 54.3 percent of the growth of involuntary part-time employment between 2007 and 2015. Black and Hispanic workers have been relatively more affected by this structural shift. While 3.7 percent of whites work part time involuntarily, 6.8 percent of Hispanic workers and 6.3 percent of black workers have part-time hours but want to work full time. Part-time workers typically have more unpredictable or variable hours, with work schedules varying week-to-week at a rate more than double that of full-time workers. Part-time workers also have lower pay and benefits coverage, such as access to health insurance and paid time off.
http://www.epi.org/files/pdf/114028.pdf

Data

STEM Occupations: Past, Present, and Future, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, January 2017
This report uses data from Occupational Employment Statistics and Employment Projections to take a closer look at STEM occupations. There were nearly 8.6 million STEM jobs in May 2015, representing 6.2 percent of U.S. employment. Computer occupations made up nearly 45 percent of STEM employment, and engineering occupations made up an additional 19 percent. The national average wage for all STEM occupations was

$87,570, nearly double the national average wage for non-STEM occupations ($45,700). Employment in STEM occupations grew by 10.5 percent (817,620 jobs) between May 2009 and May 2015, compared with 5.2 percent net growth in non-STEM occupations. The report provides data for related topics including projected growth rates, new jobs, and job openings; educational requirements; and fastest-growing STEM occupations that do not require a bachelor's degree. Over 99 percent of STEM employment was in occupations that typically require some type of postsecondary education for entry, compared with 36 percent of overall employment. Of STEM occupations that typically require less than a bachelor's degree for entry, the two fastest growing jobs are web developers (26.6 percent) and computer user support specialists (12.8 percent).
https://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2017/science-technology-engineering-and-mathematics-stem-occupations-past-present-and-future/pdf/science-technology-engineering-and-mathematics-stem-occupations-past-present-and-future.pdf

Texas Growth Occupations: Annual Report 2016, Texas Workforce Commission, December 2016
Each year, TWC gathers and studies information relating to existing and projected workforce shortages in high-wage, high-demand occupations in Texas, including for selected industries. This report summarizes those findings by industry in Texas and also contains TWC's most current short- and long-term projections for employment growth in Texas. In preparing the projections, TWC examined more than 800 occupations, segmenting them for specific industries. This report focuses on the occupational growth in Texas from 2014 through 2024 (long-term) and from 2015 through 2017 (short-term). Since no official definition of a high-wage occupation exists, TWC focused on growing occupations that pay more than the Texas median wage of $34,550 per year. While some jobs in the report require no postsecondary education, higher-paying occupations tend to require: (1) a bachelor's degree and specific technical skill training, or (2) some form of postsecondary education, specific technical skill training, and additional on-the-job training. Positive growth continues to drive demand for workers in the U.S., particularly in Texas and its surrounding states.
http://www.twc.state.tx.us/files/news/report-on-texas-growth-occupations-2016-twc.pdf

Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, September 2016
Education at a Glance provides key information on the output of educational institutions; the impact of learning across countries; the financial and human resources invested in education; access, participation, and progression in education; and the learning environment and organization of schools. The 2016 edition introduces a new indicator on the completion rate of tertiary students and another indicator on school leaders. It provides more trend data and analysis on diverse topics, such as teachers' salaries; graduation rates; expenditure on education; enrollment rates; young adults who are neither employed nor in education or training; class size; and teaching hours. The publication examines gender imbalance in education and the profile of students who attend, and graduate from, vocational education. The report covers all 35 OECD countries and a number of partner countries (Argentina, Brazil, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, India, Indonesia, Lithuania, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, and South Africa).
http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/download/9616041e.pdf?expires=1488229915&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=E9F7FDDE4DFAAF7184E0F9BB6C6ECE48

Disabilities

Work Matters: A Framework for States on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities, Council of State Governments and National Conference of State Legislatures, December 2016
Nearly 20 percent of the U.S. population, 56.7 million people, have a disability. Like other Americans, people with disabilities express a desire to find work to be economically stable and fully included in all aspects of social life. Yet a significant percentage of people with disabilities have difficulties finding, securing, and

retaining employment. More than a quarter of all working-age people with disabilities are currently experiencing poverty. Through the work of a task force, state legislators, legislative staff, and state executive branch representatives explored the causes of barriers to employment and devised bipartisan policy options supporting increased employment access and opportunities for people with disabilities. This process resulted in the development of the Work Matters framework, which includes 13 major policy options organized into five categories: laying the groundwork; preparing for work; getting to and accessing work opportunities; staying at work; and supporting self-employment and entrepreneurship. The framework is a resource for state policymakers who are interested in systematically exploring a range of state policy options that can ensure a strong, inclusive state workforce development system for students and workers with disabilities.
http://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/Documents/employ/SEED_Report_2016_Revised.pdf

Training

Connecting the Classroom to Careers: A Comprehensive Guide to the State's Role in Work-based Learning, Advance CTE, October 2016

Work-based learning is becoming an increasingly popular strategy to reinforce and deepen student learning, explore future career fields, and demonstrate skills in an authentic setting. This guide provides key considerations for building and scaling a high-quality work-based learning system. The state has a role in setting a vision for work-based learning and providing guidance as to how it should be defined, delivered, integrated into existing efforts, and made accessible to all students. Using case studies and guiding questions, the report presents five strategic recommendations: (1) establish and use a statewide vision; (2) leverage the expertise and capacity of multiple stakeholders by creating statewide intermediary organizations or establishing relationships with existing organizations; (3) encourage employer participation by addressing actual and perceived legal barriers; (4) decide the desired outcomes and how they will be measured, as well as structures and processes to ensure continuous program improvement; and (5) scale the program so that it is available to high school students statewide.
https://cte.careertech.org/sites/default/files/files/resources/WBL_Guide_2016_0.pdf