



Texas Workforce Investment Council

Policy News Highlights

Issue 15, Quarter 3, September 2011

Texas Workforce Investment Council – *Policy News Highlights* is a quarterly review of selected reports relevant to the policy and research functions of the Texas Workforce Investment Council (Council). Federal and state agency web sites, in addition to numerous public policy and educational databases are scanned monthly for relevant and emerging issues. Reports are catalogued and stored electronically in the Council’s Information Repository (IR).

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

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

This Quarter’s Selected Articles

This quarter’s selected articles spotlight higher education. With 63 percent of United States (U.S.) jobs expected to require some form of postsecondary attainment by 2018, *The College Payoff – Education, Occupation, Lifetime Earnings* looks at the economic value of college education. The second article, *The Digital Revolution and Higher Education – College Presidents, Public Differ on Value of Online Learning*, examines how one of technology’s new forms of learning, online classes, is valued by Americans.

From the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce and the Lumina Foundation, *The College Payoff* examines the worth of a college degree. Dr. Anthony Carnevale and his team say, “The data are clear: a college degree is key to economic opportunity, conferring substantially higher earnings on those with credentials than those without.” People who hold

Bachelor’s degrees now earn 84 percent more over their lifetimes than those having only a high school diploma.

Therefore, assert the paper’s authors, the premium of going to college or, the “college payoff,” has important economic implications. First, it confirms that college attainment is an increasingly significant driver of personal economic success. And, as college attainment becomes an established predictor of economic success, the gap between the financial security of those who have postsecondary training and those who do not continues to widen.

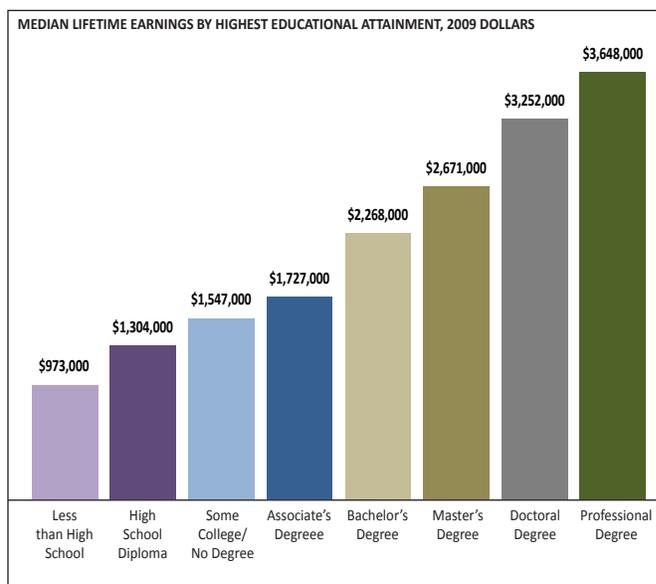
To illustrate, the authors compare Census Bureau data between 1999 and 2009 and note that the premium of having a Bachelor’s degree increased dramatically. In comparison to the 84 percent greater earnings mentioned above, in 1999, those with Bachelor’s degrees earned only 75 percent more than peers with just a high school diploma.

The College Payoff draws attention to other important factors in the earnings race. Sometimes there is wide variation for earners with the same degree but who work in different occupations. For example, financial managers with a Bachelor's degree earn about \$3.1 million over a lifetime, while accountants and auditors with Bachelor's degrees earn about \$2.5 million. Even so, within occupations themselves, degree level often has a significant impact. Truck drivers who do not have a high school diploma earn \$1.3 million, compared to \$1.5 million earned by truck drivers who do. In the case of teachers, elementary and middle school teachers with Bachelor's degrees earn approximately \$1.8 million over a lifetime, while those with Master's degrees earn \$2.2 million.

This recent article also concludes that race, ethnicity and gender play a significant role in lifetime earnings. According to the paper, women earn less than men at all degree levels and this does not change even when they work as much as men, that is, without interruption for such common reasons as child-bearing and child-rearing. There is a yearly earnings gap of 23 percent between men and women with the same educational attainment, which amounts to women earning about 25 percent less than men over a lifetime. The paper states that African Americans and Latinos earn less than Whites at all degree levels.

A more subtle aspect of contemporary earnings patterns is also highlighted by *The College Payoff*. The traditional understanding of career mobility is premised on an industry perspective where, for example, workers began in the mail room and worked their way up to the corner office. The authors argue that today, workers will progress along an occupational hierarchy rather than an industry-based hierarchy. This is because the emphasis on postsecondary education as the means to advancement will encourage workers to remain more attached to their occupations than to the industry in which they work.

The following graphic excerpted from the paper shows median lifetime earnings for individuals based on highest educational attainment. *The College Payoff* computes lifetime earnings on the model of a full-time, full-year worker, who works forty years from the age of 25 until 64.



Excerpted from *The College Payoff*, Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, page 3.

The College Pay Off makes a series of detailed comparisons between level of degree attainment, age, gender, race/ethnicity, and occupation. It also has a number of appendices detailing lifetime earnings for three hundred different occupations based on educational attainment. The authors conclude that no matter how the data is analyzed and compared, there is a large, measurable return on attending college and obtaining a two-year or four-year degree.

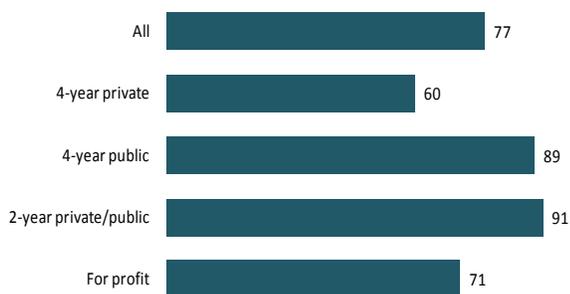
Staying on the theme of postsecondary attainment, a second recent paper focuses on a major new trend in higher education that is receiving more and more attention in workforce circles. Online courses are now common at the college level and this report reveals that there is wide-ranging opinion as to whether or not these courses are as valuable as traditional classroom teaching. In August 2011, the Pew Research Center released *The Digital Revolution and Higher Education – College Presidents, Public Differ on Value of Online Learning*.

Based on two surveys conducted earlier this year, the report focuses on opinions from the public, students and professors. One was a telephone survey of a representative sample of 2,142 adults 18 years of age and older. The second was an online survey of college presidents at 1,055 two- and four-year public, private, and for-profit colleges and universities. It was performed in collaboration with the Chronicle of Higher Education.

As large numbers of American colleges and universities try to make postsecondary attainment more flexible and accessible, many are offering online classes and sometimes online degrees. Of the college presidents surveyed, 77 percent said their institutions offered courses where instruction was exclusively online. However, exactly how and to what extent online learning has been adopted varies considerably. Ninety-one percent of two-year colleges offer online courses, while 89 percent of four-year public institutions offer them. Of those less likely to offer classes online, the report finds that 71 percent of for-profit colleges include them in their curriculum. Sixty percent of private, four-year colleges offer courses online, making them the least likely college category to do so.

Online Learning by Sector

% of college presidents saying their institution offers online classes



Note: Based on survey of college presidents
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Excerpted from *The Digital Revolution and Higher Education*, Pew Research Center, page 9.

In terms of the actual value of online learning, a relatively small percentage of the public, 29 percent, think that online courses offer an equal value compared with courses taken in the classroom. Sixty percent of respondents participating in the general survey said online courses did not offer equal value, and 11 percent were not certain. This contrasts with the finding that a little over half of college presidents, 51 percent, believe that online courses are of equal value as classroom courses.

Despite the prevalence of online learning, skepticism on the part of the public at large was fairly consistently distributed among the major demographic groups. Only 28 percent of people under the age of 30 answered that a course

taken online was of equal value as a classroom course, while 67 percent said that it was not. For respondents over age 30, a similar proportion of 30 percent answered that online courses were of equal value, while 58 percent said online classes were not of equal value to classroom teaching.

Among college graduates, 68 percent answered that online courses were of less value, while 22 percent said they were of equal value. College students who had personally taken online classes were more positive, responding at 39 percent that online classes were of equal value to those taken in the classroom. Nevertheless, a majority of students who had taken online courses, 57 percent, said they were not of equal value to classroom courses. In contrast, more college professors had a positive view of the value of online courses, with 51 percent saying they were equal to classroom courses, and 48 percent saying they were not. Furthermore, presidents at colleges where online learning is integrated into the curriculum were considerably more positive: 59 percent believed online classes were of equal value to in-person classes.

Other findings in the Pew report are:

- College presidents say that about 15 percent of their current students are taking online classes, but that within the next 10 years, this share will increase to 50 percent.
- Two-thirds of college presidents said they expect more than half of college textbooks to be in digital format in 10 years.

Looking at both articles together, it is clear that the role of higher education continues to be an important economic element of assuring U.S. competitiveness in the global economy. The trend in higher education appears to be increasingly occupation-oriented, which reinforces the observation made in *The College Payoff* that economic mobility is shifting from an industry-based to occupation-based paradigm. It is interesting to observe that despite the fact that opinions on the way education itself is delivered vary so much in the U.S., online teaching is nevertheless taking hold. Online learning is fast becoming common in American colleges and universities. ★

Of Interest - Abbreviated Summaries

Adult Education

Facing the Challenge of Numeracy in Adult Education, Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, September 2011.

The purpose of this report is to raise the awareness of the importance of numeracy in adult education and to encourage policymakers to consider ways of improving the way it is taught. According to this paper, “numeracy” is a term coined by adult education experts referring to the basic math skills they believe should be included in adult education. Math is increasingly on the minds of U.S. educators, which is clearly evident by ongoing national discussions for strengthening math instruction in the K-12 system.

According to this paper, effective ways of teaching math in adult education may be inspired by systems in other countries. For example, in the English system, adult education is referred to as “adult literacy and numeracy” and math is taught in separate classes by different teachers. However, in the U.S. math is included in the definition of literacy as “computation,” and is frequently taught alongside literacy skills by the same teacher.

The purpose of this report is to help raise the visibility of numeracy in adult education and to stimulate thinking about how it might be improved—to expose the “Achilles heel” in the hope that it can be strengthened.

This paper looks at the problems in adult math education and suggests that as the nation undertakes making improvements to math instruction throughout K-12, the adult education system should improve on math instruction, as well. Moving beyond the traditional memorization procedures to teaching the understanding of concepts and various applications would require an entirely new math curriculum. This report makes some suggestions for first steps in determining a new comprehensive math curriculum in adult education. ★

Apprenticeship

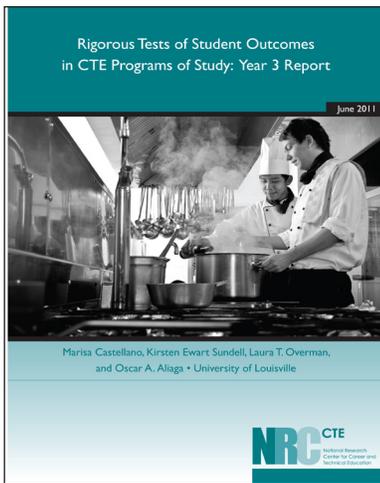
Improving Access To Apprenticeship: Strengthening State Policies and Practices, Working Poor Families Project, Summer 2011.

According to this recent brief, apprenticeship is poised to be a premier pathway to sustainable careers and higher education in various industries, work environments and geographic regions across the country. Focusing on what might be done at the state level to improve access to apprenticeship, the report contains numerous examples of states’ efforts to encourage employers to develop and offer apprenticeships, to improve participant access and success in apprenticeships, and to strengthen the pipelines for apprentices to acquire postsecondary and industry-recognized credentials. The paper points out that a by-product of pursuing these efforts for states is strengthening ties within their borders among apprenticeship programs, workforce development systems, and pre-apprenticeship programs. In addition, some states have discovered ways to leverage their funding sources to help expand apprenticeship and related services. ★

Career and Technical Education

Rigorous Tests of Student Outcomes in CTE Programs of Study: Year 3 Report, National Research Center for Career and Technical Education, June 2011.

This is a longitudinal study in year three of a four-year research project. Carl D. Perkins federal legislation funds career technical education (CTE) across the country, and in its most recent reauthorization is entitled Perkins IV. It modified CTE practice by heightening program accountability for academic achievement, technical skills achievement, and calling for alignment with postsecondary technical education as programs of study or “POS.” The *Year 3 Report* looks at how POS impacts the academic and technical achievement outcomes of high school students.



Presenting early findings, this report describes the study's subject schools, discusses whether or not their CTE programs meet POS requirements, presents ninth-grade CTE and academic outcomes, and also includes the results of a student survey.

POS are designed to integrate rigorous technical content with state academic standards and the interim results of this report do point to evidence of such increased technical and academic rigor. The authors caution that it is too early to make definitive statements regarding student outcomes between non-POS and POS CTE high schools.

The study will also eventually investigate how POS students transition to employment or postsecondary education. The *Year 3 Report* offers examples of how classrooms that teach rigorous technical skills look, what ways employability and soft skills are taught, and how students approach opportunities for postsecondary credit. As students progress in their POS, future reports plan to include information about both college credits and industry-recognized credentials earned in high school. ★

Clusters and Sector Strategies

An Economy that Works: Job Creation and America's Future, McKinsey Global Institute, June 2011.

This comprehensive paper says that over the last 20 years, the U.S. has experienced increasingly lengthy "jobless recoveries" from recessions. While recoveries after recessions in the 1980s lasted on average 6 months, the 1990-1991 recession required 15 months for employment to return to pre-recession levels, and the 2001 recession required a full 39 months. In order to restore the U.S. economy this decade, this paper states that 21 million new jobs will be needed. Based on current rates of job creation, the authors

suggest it may take until 2016 to return to pre-recession levels, or as long as 60 months.

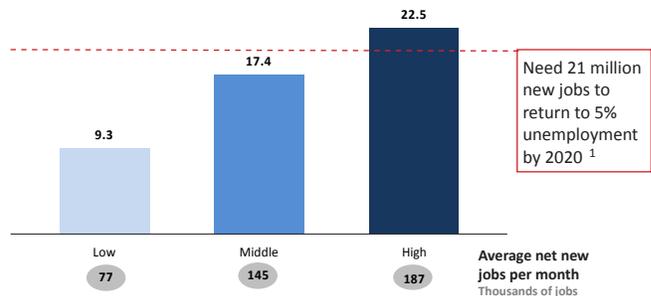
There are six sectors that have the most potential for job creation including: health care, business services, leisure and hospitality, construction, manufacturing, and retail. Sixty-six percent of employment today is in these sectors, and projections indicate that they will account for approximately 85 percent of new jobs over the remainder of the decade.

An Economy that Works presents three scenarios for employment demand based on macroeconomic forecasts for sector job growth and analysis of industry trends. The highest job-growth scenario would produce 22.5 million new jobs by 2020, and would require robust performance in each of the six sectors, a strong demand for U.S. products both here and abroad, and strong rates of new business creation.

Exhibit 10

The high-job-growth scenario is the only one that returns the United States to 5 percent unemployment by 2020

Employment demand scenarios
2020, millions of jobs



¹Based on our labor force supply projections discussed in Chapter 3 of this report
SOURCE: Moody's Analytics; McKinsey Global Institute analysis

The chart above is excerpted and adapted from *An Economy that Works: Job Creation and America's Future*, McKinsey Global Institute, page 23. ★



Competitiveness

A Dozen Economic Facts About Innovation,
The Hamilton Project, August 2011.

This policy memo presents an overview of American innovation in 12 succinct statements. The report shows the many ways in which innovation has benefitted modern society, with particular emphasis on how innovation spurred economic growth in the 20th century. However, beginning in the 1970s, the pace of innovation began to lag and this phenomenon has eventually led to a reduction in overall wage growth for U.S. workers. A significant part of the memo focuses on what policies and investments the authors suggest to promote innovation in a global economy. The Hamilton Project's dozen economic facts follow:

Innovation Facts:

1. Innovation drives economic growth and raises wages.
2. Innovation improves U.S. life expectancy.
3. Innovation makes technology affordable.
4. New organizational structures lead to rising standards of living.
5. New household technologies allow more time for family and leisure.
6. The pace of American innovation has slowed during the past four decades.
7. Innovation has failed to increase wages for a substantial number of Americans.
8. Significant barriers to innovation exist in the government and the private sector.
9. Federal support for research and development has declined in recent years.
10. Relatively few U.S. college students study fields critical to innovation.
11. American women are less likely to continue in STEM fields than American men.
12. U.S. policy makes it difficult for international students to stay and work. ★

Disabilities

The State of Learning Disabilities: Facts, Trends and Indicators, Center for Learning Disabilities, July 2011.

This recent paper serves as an overview and report

on learning disabilities (abbreviated in the plural as LD) in the U.S. today. It is the biennial update to the first report of its kind by the National Center for Learning Disabilities that was published in 2009. *The State of Learning Disabilities* contains key facts, an overview defining common LD, legal protections for those who have them, and what currently is known about the causes of LD and frequency of occurrence in the general population. With regard to labor market implications, the paper has information on the unemployment and employment rate for adults with LD. For example, the unemployment rate for adults with LD is higher, by about 5.7 percent, than it is for those without. Similarly, the employment rate for adults with LD is lower, at about 54.8 percent, than the employment rate of those without, which is 76.4 percent. The paper also contains information about LD in the public school system, including information about retention, dropping out and graduation from high school. The authors explain that the dropout rate for high school students with LD has declined from 40 percent in 2000, to 22 percent in 2009, and they suggest that the decline is due to the increase in offerings of alternate certificates. Last, as LD are better understood, the public attitude about LD is changing. Most Americans now acknowledge that children with LD have average or above average intelligence, and many parents understand that proper instruction can assist children in coping with LD. ★

Dropout Prevention

Making Every Diploma Count: Using Extended-Year Graduation Rates to Measure Student Success, American Youth Policy Forum, August, 2011.

As the U.S. is growing more and more conscious about the need to improve educational attainment, states are working harder at ensuring that all high school students graduate within four years. The writers of this policy brief agree that this should remain the expectation across the country. However, for students who struggle or who fall off-track, graduating within five or six years of entering the ninth grade maybe a more reasonable expectation. This paper describes the benefits of including an extended-year graduation rate in accountability measures. Some

policymakers believe relying entirely on a four-year graduation rate can have a punitive effect on schools and students if they are labeled as “in need of improvement,” and simultaneously create a disincentive for districts and schools to serve struggling and off-track youth. With the growing impetus for states to direct resources toward schools and districts for dropout prevention, this paper explains that a more flexible accountability system that can include a range of options for high school students is preferable. Using an extended-year graduation rate allows both schools and districts to keep track of and document their successes in assisting struggling students or recovering former out-of-school youth who were simply unable to graduate in four years.

Calculating the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate

The four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate is calculated as follows:

$$\frac{\text{\# of students in cohort who graduate in 4 years or less}}{\text{[\# of 1st time entering 9th graders for four years earlier] - transfers out + transfers in}}$$

In May 2011, about 22 states, including Texas, reported (or are planning to) extended-year graduation rates. Only four use the rates for purposes of accountability. The “Accountability Rating System for Texas Public Schools and Districts” measures both high school completers and students who stay on track to graduation from high school beyond the traditional four-year timeline. Texas also has implemented a measure that is used by alternate education providers enabling them to be accountable for their progress with regard to students in their system. ★

Green

A Green Career Pathways Framework: Postsecondary and Employment Success for Low-Income, Disconnected Youth, The Corps Network, June 2011.

The authors of this paper emphasize that they are not promoting a particular green jobs program, but rather offering a template for youth program leaders who wish to link to green career pathways in their communities. The greening of the

economy is leading to the emergence of new and retooled occupations that are mostly middle-skill jobs



requiring training beyond high school but less than a four-year college degree. The paper is focused on directing low-income and disconnected youth toward a pathway out of poverty and into the economic mainstream. The framework has three main components and its first step is ensuring credentials have labor market value, including ways to connect industry and postsecondary players to recognize green jobs demand and the training that will connect youth to green career pathways. Second, the framework utilizes an “on-ramp model” that enables youth to acquire skills and credentials for green careers through phases: enriched preparation, bridging and transition, and first-year supports to completion. Third, the framework details strategies to connect youth programs and postsecondary institutions. The paper includes personal success stories and highlights successful and developing programs across the country. ★

Training

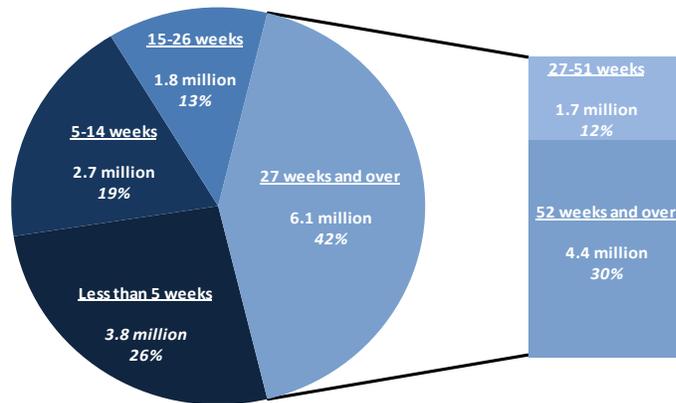
Addressing Long-Term Unemployment after the Great Recession: The Crucial Role Of Workforce Training, U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee, August 2011.

This brief released by the U.S. Joint Economic Committee presents a summary of the U.S. economic climate since the Great Recession, beginning in December of 2007. At present, nearly 4.5 million American workers have been unemployed for a year or more, while 1.7 million have been without work for between six months and one year.

While unemployment is relatively high, the number of job openings is also high. There are almost five unemployed workers for every one

Figure 2: Share of unemployed by duration

June 2011, Not seasonally adjusted



Source: Chairman's Staff of the Joint Economic Committee based on data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Excerpted and adapted from *Addressing Long-Term Unemployment After the Recession*, U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee, page 3.

opening, but employers are unable to find workers with the right skills for key positions. Assisting workers to train and learn new skills and then find jobs that are appropriate for their skills could alleviate this mismatch.

According to the brief, workforce training programs that help workers more effectively search and match for jobs are essential, as are programs that train unemployed workers for particular sector demands. The paper contains charts averaging unemployment rates across demographic groups and occupations, and 2010 averages of labor force and unemployment distribution. ★

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

For more information, visit: <http://governor.state.tx.us/twic/>

