

A photograph of the U.S. Capitol building in Washington, D.C., taken at dusk or night. The dome and the facade of the building are illuminated, casting a warm glow against the darkening sky. The American flag flies from a pole in front of the building.

Association for Career
and Technical Education



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Legislative Priorities

2021

CTE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Career and technical education (CTE) prepares students to be college- and career-ready by providing core academic skills, employability skills and technical, job-specific skills. It also fulfills employer needs in high-skill, high-wage, in-demand areas. CTE is delivered flexibly through high schools, area career centers, career academies, community and technical colleges, four-year universities and more. CTE prepares students for a range of career options through 16 Career Clusters® and more than 79 pathways. These Career Clusters include subjects that touch virtually every sector of the economy and are much more diverse than what used to be known as “vocational education.” Students today take CTE classes in subjects ranging from health science and information technology to engineering, construction, business and marketing. These classes lead students to industry certifications, licenses, and postsecondary certificates and degrees.

Benefits for High School Students

High school students overwhelmingly participate in CTE, with 92 percent earning CTE credit, and many making a significant investment of time in CTE.* Secondary CTE students are more engaged, graduate at higher rates and typically go on to postsecondary education. Among the many benefits that CTE delivers at the secondary level:

- Participating in CTE is associated with a lower chance of dropping out and a higher chance of graduating on time.
- The average high school graduation rate for students concentrating in CTE programs is 94%, compared to an overall graduation rate of 85%.
- High school graduates who earn CTE credits are about as likely to enroll in postsecondary education as the overall student population.

Opportunities for Postsecondary CTE Students

Around 8.4 million individuals are seeking postsecondary certificates and associate degrees in CTE fields. Postsecondary CTE prepares students and adults for in-demand careers, and allows them to assume less debt while doing so. Among the many benefits of CTE at the postsecondary level:

- For workers with associate degrees, the percentage of “good jobs”—jobs that pay a median annual income of \$55,000 or higher without a bachelor’s degree—grew by 83% between 1991 and 2016.
- Individuals with associate degrees in CTE fields of study can earn \$10,000 more per year than those with associate degrees in other fields.
- Students can attend public community and technical colleges for a fraction of the cost of tuition at other institutions: \$3,770, on average, in 2020-2021.

Business, Industry and the Economy All Depend on High-quality CTE

CTE addresses the needs of business and industry and helps close the skills gap by preparing students with high-level skills for in-demand jobs. Among the many benefits of CTE for the economy:

- Occupations in the skilled trades, information technology, sales and marketing, driving and logistics, construction, customer support and health care are some of the top jobs employers are having trouble filling in the United States. CTE plays a critical role in training workers in these areas.
- More than half of the nation's fastest-growing occupations require education below a bachelor's degree, as do half of all STEM jobs.
- 89 percent of manufacturers report talent shortages, with 60 percent reporting that the skills shortage will have a high or very high impact on productivity.
- Health care occupations are projected to grow 15% by 2029, adding more than 2 million new jobs.
- Many of the almost 17.2 million workers employed in infrastructure jobs are nearing retirement.
- Investments in CTE yield big returns for state economies. For example, Colorado Community College System alumni in the workforce contribute \$5.1 billion annually to the state, and in Wisconsin, taxpayers receive \$12.20 in benefits for every dollar invested in the technical college system. Oklahoma's economy reaps a net benefit of \$3.5 billion annually from graduates of the CareerTech System.

* This includes occupationally specific courses, career exploration courses and Family and Consumer Sciences courses.

For additional information and citations for the facts above, visit acteonline.org/basic-facts or contact cimperatore@acteonline.org.



2021 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

1. Significantly Increase Funding for Perkins CTE State Grants in FY 2022

The Perkins Basic State Grant program is the principal source of dedicated federal funding for CTE, which helps build the capacity of secondary and postsecondary institutions to serve millions of students nationwide, and is more important than ever given the current economic climate. Perkins Basic State Grant funds are allocated to all 50 states through a need-based formula, and are designed to help ensure all students have the academic, technical and employability skills they will need for career success. Increasing Perkins funding will expand access to high-quality CTE programs to a greater number of secondary, postsecondary and adult learners. It will strengthen the capacity of school districts and postsecondary institutions to deliver academically rigorous CTE content, ensure support for special populations, afford the latest technology and equipment for the classroom, strengthen employer partnerships, provide college and career counseling services, deliver educator professional development opportunities, and ensure students have the skills needed in the 21st century economy. By preparing individuals for further education and rewarding careers, CTE is a smart investment for the future—for learners, families, employers and the nation. Therefore, to empower states and CTE educators to effectively implement high-quality CTE programs, **we urge Congress to support our students and future workforce by significantly increasing funding for the Perkins Basic State Grant program in FY 2022** as part of a campaign to double the investment in CTE.

2. Support Robust COVID-19 Relief Funds for Education and Workforce Development Systems

The COVID-19 pandemic has been taxing and testing our nation's educational, digital and technology infrastructure. The CTE community, which is the talent pipeline for many of our nation's skilled workers, has not been immune to these challenges. CTE programs are facing many of the same dire needs as the entire education system, particularly those related to broadband and technology access, virtual curriculum and instruction, health and safety precautions, and teacher professional development. For these reasons, **we support robust funding to stabilize state and local education budgets**. In addition, dedicated resources are needed for CTE programs to aid in economic recovery and getting Americans back to work. **We urge support of the Relaunching America's Workforce Act (H.R. 602)** to provide \$1 billion in dedicated COVID-19 relief funding for CTE.

3. Ensure Higher Education Act Reauthorization Reflects Today's Diverse Postsecondary Education Landscape

The labor market demand for a skilled workforce increasingly requires employees to have some type of postsecondary education. The reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) provides an opportunity for Congress to strengthen postsecondary CTE programs and support students by reducing barriers to high-quality programs, ensuring data is available about postsecondary options and strengthening the CTE teacher pipeline. A reauthorized HEA should:

- Reduce barriers to higher education for all.
 - Expand Pell grant eligibility for short-term training courses and programs by incorporating the bipartisan **JOBS Act** (S. 839/H.R.3497, 116th Congress), and eliminate penalties for working students.
 - Prioritize employment related to field-of-study for work-study participants and allow related work-study to qualify for required internship or apprenticeship credit, as appropriate.
 - Promote innovative, student-centric models like competency-based education and dual enrollment.
- Ensure program quality and integrity while reducing data collection burdens.
 - Eliminate the ban on a federal student unit record data system to ease data collection and reporting burdens, by incorporating the **College Transparency Act** (S. 800/H.R.1766, 116th Congress).
 - Include program level information in data systems and track employment outcomes, as well as information on certificates, licenses and industry-recognized certifications earned by students.
- Support the development and preparation of CTE educators.
 - Incentivize CTE teacher preparation program development through HEA Title II funds.
 - Preserve TEACH Grants, educator loan forgiveness programs and other supports for current and future teachers.
 - Increase access to efficient and effective alternative pathways to teacher certification for mid-career professionals.

4. Invest in an Infrastructure Workforce Pipeline by Supporting CTE Programs of Study & School Facilities

Addressing the deficiencies in our nation's vital infrastructure will require more than just new investments in roads, bridges, airports and waterways. It must also include a commitment to developing the skilled workforce that can design, build, upgrade and maintain that infrastructure. Local CTE programs are well positioned to equip students and incumbent workers with the educational opportunities and work-based learning they will need for career success in infrastructure fields. **Federal infrastructure legislation should include dedicated resources to develop and expand CTE programs of study that are essential to creating a robust workforce pipeline to rebuild our infrastructure** and secure its sustainability for the future. Additionally, any comprehensive infrastructure proposal should include our nation's public schools, whose average age is nearly 50 years old. The condition of school buildings provide a crucial foundation for classroom learning, health and safety that affects students and the American economy, which is why their prioritization is critical. **The Rebuild America's Schools Act (H.R. 604) should be incorporated into future infrastructure legislation.**

5. Strengthen Connections Between Education and Workforce Development Systems

The potential reauthorizations of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and the National Apprenticeship Act (NAA) provide Congress an opportunity to modernize the nation's workforce systems to ensure that job seekers can access employment, education, training and support services to succeed in the labor market, and that employers have the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. Any reauthorizations of these programs should strengthen connections between education and workforce development systems, increase access to high-quality training, use relevant labor market information to ensure programs reflect local economic needs, and provide adequate resources and support services for vulnerable populations.





About ACTE

The Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) is the nation's largest not-for-profit association committed to the advancement of education that prepares youth and adults for successful careers. ACTE represents the community of CTE professionals, including educators, administrators, researchers, school counselors, guidance and career development professionals and others at all levels of education. ACTE is committed to excellence in providing advocacy, public awareness and access to resources, professional development and leadership opportunities.

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Join the CTE Caucus

Both the Senate and House have bipartisan CTE caucuses that work in Congress to enhance awareness of CTE's important role in preparing a well-educated and skilled workforce in America. To join the CTE Caucus, contact the office of any of the co-chairs. In the Senate, the co-chairs are Sens. Tim Kaine (D-VA), Rob Portman (R-OH), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Todd Young (R-IN). In the House, the co-chairs are Reps. Glenn Thompson (R-PA) and Jim Langevin (D-RI).