

## New Report Discusses State Funding for Adult Education Services

The Center for Law and Social Policy [CLASP](#) and the National Council of State Directors of Adult Education ([NCSDAE](#)) recently released a new report, [Sinking or Swimming: Findings from a Survey of State Adult Education Tuition and Financing Policies](#). The report summarizes findings from a jointly sponsored national survey of adult education state directors conducted during February 2012.

The goal of the report was to better understand the policies that govern the way adult education is funded, including the costs borne by local districts, community colleges, and other providers and by the states, the federal government, and students. The survey found that although states vary widely across each topic covered, most strive to keep costs low for students. While the report includes state responses to its recommendations, it does not present a causal analysis of why certain states choose one method over another, what policies are likely to support a particular outcome, or which policies yield the greatest revenue. It does recommend that more research be done to understand how state policy can encourage programming in support of college and career readiness, as well as how federal and state policies may affect overall funding levels for basic skills services.

The report also recommends that states ensure policies support, rather than discourage, programs that expand economic opportunities for lower-skilled adult students and English language learners. This is because adults without a high school diploma or equivalency have the highest unemployment rates and lowest wages across all educational attainment levels. The report points out that creating barriers to student successes or the attainment of essential educational credentials runs counter to the nation's economic growth. Investing in these workers, however, not only helps them achieve greater economic self-sufficiency, but also establishes a greater pool of skilled workers to meet the growing demand.

We encourage interested parties to read the [full report](#), which includes survey methodology and limitations, as well as detailed information from the 44 participating states.

## SkillsUSA National Meeting

In late June, OVAE Assistant Secretary Brenda Dann-Messier was a featured speaker at the 48th annual [SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference](#). [SkillsUSA](#) is a partnership of students, teachers, and industry working together to ensure America has a skilled work force. At each yearly conference, SkillsUSA holds national championship competitions. This year over 5,600 public high school and college/postsecondary technical students enrolled in career and technical education programs—each of whom is a state-level gold medalist in a given skill or leadership area—competed in 94 skills and leadership contests. Over 900 medals and 300 recognition awards were presented to the contestants. More than 20 companies participated in the SkillsUSA career fair, with the in-kind industry and education contributions totaling more than \$35 million. The volunteer hours contributed by technical committee members, the courtesy corps, and national education team, judges, and alumni totaled more than 58,000.

Commenting on the experience, Dann-Messier said, “I was truly humbled and inspired by the ... students who competed in 94 skills competitions .... Equally amazing was the enormous outpouring of support—through voluntarism, cash contributions, state-of-the-art equipment, etc.—from hundreds of teachers, national advisers, and business and industry leaders across this nation. I walked away filled with hope for our nation’s future workforce and prosperity.” Dann-Messier also spoke at the Youth Development Foundation Awards and Recognition Luncheon, before the SkillsUSA corporate meeting, and before the SkillsUSA joint delegate special session. At these sessions, she discussed President Obama’s agenda for improving American education and ensuring that all students graduate high school college- and career-ready. She emphasized that the president has asked “[e]very American to commit to at least one year or more of higher education or career training. This can be community college or a four-year school; vocational training or an apprenticeship. But whatever the training may be, every American will need to get more than a high school diploma.”

Dann-Messier also addressed the principal components of [Investing in America’s Future: A Blueprint for Transforming Career and Technical Education](#), the administration’s proposal for the reauthorization of the *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006* (Perkins IV). This blueprint is designed to help implement President Obama’s strategy for building “an economy that is built to last.” Transforming CTE is essential if America is to retain its preeminence as the world’s economic superpower. A transformed CTE will provide students with the academic and technical knowledge and work-related skills necessary to be successful in postsecondary education and employment.

A CTE capable of meeting the prerequisites of the 21st-century economy must be anchored in four core principles: alignment, collaboration, accountability, and innovation. Dann-Messier’s remarks emphasized the importance of each of these core principles in transforming the CTE system.