

Duncan Calls for Rigor and Relevance in CTE

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, [spoke](#) to the [National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium \(NASDCTE\)](#) on April 19 at the Marriott Washington Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, D.C. He called for the field of CTE to take its “enormous, if often overlooked impact on students, school systems, and our ability to prosper as a nation ... [and] strengthen [its] rigor and relevance and deliver better outcomes for students.” Duncan acknowledged that CTE has been neglected as a part of the reform movement and said that to focus more attention on it “... means committing to increased innovation, rigor and results. At a time when local, state, and federal governments are all facing tremendous budget pressure, CTE advocates must make a compelling case for continued funding.” The result, he said, should be “...CTE 2.0, [where] students earn a postsecondary credential or an industry- recognized certification –and land a job that leads to a successful career.”

Duncan called for a more balanced consideration of the “career-ready” side of “college- and career-ready,” acknowledging that “... the truth is that most people, --and I include myself here --have focused primarily on college-readiness. Too often, career-readiness is an afterthought.” He explained that career-ready is more difficult to define than college-ready. In addition to academic skills, Duncan stated, “...a career-ready student must ... have the knowledge and skills that employers need from day one. That means having critical thinking and problem-solving skills, an ability to synthesize information, solid communication skills, and the ability to work well on a team.” He spoke of the current view of CTE as “old school,” when, in fact, “Career pathways now spelled out in the rigorous Programs of Study initiative would span secondary and postsecondary education by design, and concentrate much more on high-demand, high-wage occupations.”

He went on to describe his view of the task confronting CTE, saying,

“Right now, CTE programs receiving federal support under the *Perkins Act* need to make a convincing case for funding. That starts by demonstrating how you are improving student outcomes. And there’s no better data to demonstrate that than by identifying how many students are going on to postsecondary education and starting careers in the pathway they studied.

We should be able to look at every CTE program in your state and answer how many students graduate from high school and transition successfully into and complete at least one year of postsecondary education or training. If a program cannot deliver these outcomes or provide these data, then we should re-tool it.”

Duncan described the Department’s approach to the upcoming reauthorization of the *Perkins Act* as “...working with Congress to ensure CTE programs are preparing college- and career-ready students. We will strengthen and align them with K–12 programs under the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*.”

He then promised that, “Once CTE programs deliver on the promise of truly preparing students for success in college and careers, their successes will make a compelling case for further investment. I will be your strongest advocate for ensuring that these programs receive the funding they need to help students achieve.”

OVAE Seeks Interns to Work on CTE, Adult Education, Community Colleges or Correctional Education

Do you know of someone who is interested in an opportunity to learn about: education at the federal level, education policy, the administration’s education reform and what “college- and career-ready” means? Is that person or will that person be a student enrolled at least half-time during the regular school year? And are they interested in applying for an unpaid internship position at OVAE beginning this summer, next fall, or next spring? (Note that it is fine if they have the summer off, provided they will be enrolled at least half-time in the fall.)

If you know of someone who qualifies for and is interested in this position, please suggest that they visit the Department’s website at <http://www2.ed.gov/students/prep/job/intern/index.html>, where prospective interns apply. The work will be determined jointly by OVAE and the intern, and will focus on adult education, career and technical education, community colleges, and/or correctional education.