

OVAE CONNECTION

Accelerating Opportunity: A Breaking-Through Initiative Launches

OVAE announces the launch of [Accelerating Opportunity](#), an ambitious multi-state effort that promotes improved academic access and economic opportunity for low-skilled adults in Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon and Wisconsin. OVAE is a member of the steering committee for this multi-year, multi-million dollar initiative.

The initiative is managed by the Boston-based organization Jobs for the Future (JFF). OVAE will support its work by helping redesign adult basic and postsecondary education programs to integrate basic skills with practical, occupational training and adequate institutional support for adult learners. In November, approximately five of the 11 states will be selected to receive implementation grants over a three – year period to execute their plans. The program will ultimately engage at least 40 community colleges across the country and impact about 40,000 adult learners.

“*Accelerating Opportunity* will give adults without skills and credentials beyond high school the tools that they need to secure a brighter future.” said Johan Uvin, deputy assistant secretary for policy and strategic initiatives. “We hope this initiative will help the nation build a stronger, more stable economy and a workforce better equipped to participate in today and tomorrow’s global market.”

The initiative is supported by a ground-breaking coalition of funders—the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Kresge Foundation and the Open Society Foundations. For program and implementation expertise, JFF has engaged the National Council for Workforce Education, the National College Transition Network and the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.



OVAE Welcomes Heidi Silver-Pacuilla

OVAE is pleased to welcome Heidi Silver-Pacuilla as the new team leader of the applied innovation and improvement team in the Division of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL). Prior to joining ED, Silver-Pacuilla was the deputy director of the National Center for Technology Innovation at the American Institutes for Research (AIR) under a \$5 million Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services grant. In her role at AIR, she also worked with DAEL’s Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy project. Silver-Pacuilla holds a doctorate with a major in adult literacy and a minor in learning disability from the University of Arizona. Her work in assistive technology for adult education as a NIDRR Mary Switzer Fellow resulted in an Early Scholar Award from the American Educational Research Association in 2005. She has authored over 15 professional publications, including [Investigating the Language and Literacy Skills Required for Independent Online Learning](#), and was coeditor of, [Breakthrough Teaching and Learning: How Educational and Assistive Technologies are Driving Innovation](#) (2011).

Welcome, Heidi!

CTE and STEM (Part of a Continuing Series)

As noted last week, many STEM-related jobs, especially the most desirable and well-compensated of them, require education beyond high school. Addressing this need, Anthony Carnevale and his associates at the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce [specify that](#) “America needs more workers with college degrees, certificates and industry certifications ... If we don’t address this need now, millions of jobs could go offshore.”

The National Association of State Directors for Career and Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEc) and others focused on the career and technical proficiency of students recognize that a major emphasis must be placed on ensuring that students are academically prepared to succeed in these challenging jobs that typically require postsecondary education. According to the NASDCTEc website, the [CTE community](#) “has re-dedicated itself to work together at every level to transform the U.S. education system ... into a new, even more productive system ...” Progress has been made in attracting students to take more advanced academic courses, but according to an [issue brief](#) by the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), “more must be done to ensure a fully developed, skilled STEM workforce that will help secure America’s economic future.” Organizations across the education and business spectrum s, including OVAE, ACTE, and NASDCTEc, insist that the initiatives embodied in rigorous programs of study, integrate courses combining academic and technical approaches. These supporting methods form an integral part of a broad-based curriculum and instructional approach designed to enhance students’ understanding of STEM subjects and to attract more students into STEM career pathways. The problem, [according to NASDCTEc](#), is that “Unfortunately, growth in these sectors is hampered by jobs that go unfilled because there is a shortage of qualified, skilled workers.” (To be continued in future issue)