

OVAE CONNECTION

CTE and STEM (Part of a Continuing Series)

The Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) [has identified](#) two main factors for the deficit in STEM workers in the U.S. First, the STEM labor force is rapidly turning over as baby boomers retire. Second, too few U.S. students are preparing for STEM careers, notable engineering. Each of these is occurring while the [U.S. business community](#) is calling for a doubling of the number of annual STEM graduates by 2015. In addition to graduates with bachelor's degrees, there will be a need for more STEM technicians with associate degrees and certificates.

Unfortunately, many U.S. students arrive at a decisive point in their education without the requisite foundational skills to pursue these opportunities, as evidenced in the results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). In addition, while the education deficit exists across the spectrum of U.S. students, significant achievement gaps exist between races and ethnicities and genders. This is a growing problem both for low-achieving students and for the nation as a whole, inasmuch as racial and ethnic minorities will make up an increasingly large percentage of the U.S. workforce during the 21st century.

The ACTE brief, a recent report from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, [Pathways to Prosperity: Meeting the Challenge](#), and other studies posit that career and technical education is an essential component in attempts to enhance the employability of American students. This can be assisted through the adoption of career exploration, career clusters, career pathways, rigorous programs of study, and the integration of academic learning, career education, and technology. In addition, encouraging students to pursue STEM pathways early enough in their schooling will help to build interest in STEM careers, leading them to acquire the academic preparation essential for higher-level positions in these occupations.

Final Application Released for Race to the Top- Early Learning Challenge

The final application for the [Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge](#) (RTT-ELC) was recently released. The program will provide \$500 million in state-level competitive grants to improve early learning and development programs. Proposals must demonstrate a commitment to aligning resources and policies and increasing access to high-quality early learning and development programs for low-income and disadvantaged children. RTT-ELC will focus on five key areas of reform:

- Establishing successful state systems;
- Defining high-quality, accountable programs;
- Promoting early learning and development outcomes for children;
- Supporting a great early childhood education workforce; and
- Measuring outcomes and progress.



OVAE Welcomes Cyrus Garrett

W. Cyrus Garrett has joined OVAE as a confidential assistant in the Office of the Assistant Secretary. He will help that office with speech preparation and administrative functions. Garrett comes to OVAE from the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Counternarcotics Enforcement (CNE), where he served as a special advisor to the director on strategic communications and policy for the past two years. He was the director's point person on western hemisphere international affairs, and conducted bi-national assessments on the flow of bulk cash and the smuggling of weapons from the U.S. into Mexico, and Central and South America. Garrett performed congressional relations functions for CNE, including drafting responses to congressional letters and questions for the record, coordinating and writing testimonies, and monitoring legislation. Prior to that, Garrett helped design and implement the current White House Internship program. Before his government service, Garrett served as a regional political director and deputy regional field director for President Obama's field campaign in Indiana, following field work in six other states. Prior to joining the campaign, Garrett worked as a gang and drug counselor at the Eldora State Training School for Boys in Iowa. Garrett attended both the University of Illinois and University of Northern Iowa (UNI) and received his bachelor's degree in criminology from UNI. He is a native of Chicago, where he grew up with two older sisters.

Welcome, Cyrus!

(Continued from the left column)

Grant awards will range from around \$50 million to up to \$100 million, depending on state population and plans. Applications are due on Oct. 19. The departments of Education and Health and Human Services, our partner in this program, will announce winners in December.