

## Secretary Duncan Holds Town Hall at Wake Tech

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan held a town hall meeting with nearly 300 students, faculty, employers and state officials at [Wake Technical Community College](#) in Raleigh, N.C., on Oct. 25, 2011. He congratulated Wake Tech for being "a shining example of how community colleges are partnering with local and regional employers to meet the workforce needs of Raleigh." Biotechnology, health care, and information technology companies described how they are partnering with Wake Tech, hiring its graduates and contracting with it for employee training.

Duncan spoke about the *American Jobs Act* and the \$5 billion it would provide to support the modernization of classrooms and labs at colleges like Wake Tech. The college currently has a waiting list of over 5,000 students and, according to its president, Stephen Scott, 30,000 square feet of unfinished instructional facilities that could be completed with the act's funds. Duncan said the college is an example of the many community colleges overflowing with students due to record increases in recent enrollment.

Duncan directed his closing remarks to the students in the audience, stating that the best way to succeed in the knowledge economy—and the only way America will prosper in the decades to come—is through student dedication to learning and to degree completion. Deputy Assistant Secretary for Community Colleges Frank Chong and Department teaching fellows held a roundtable discussion with faculty on strategies for encouraging students to finish their degrees. A second roundtable featured student suggestions for increasing college completion rates.

## Colorado Steps Up to Meet the President's 2020 College Completion Goal

The Colorado Community College System and the Colorado Department of Higher Education sponsored the first-ever Colorado Community College Summit, Pathways to College and Beyond, on Oct. 24, 2011, in Denver. The two-day summit brought together teams from all fifteen of Colorado's community colleges. In addition to college administrators, faculty, staff and students, leaders from K–12, four-year universities, and business, along with local and state elected officials participated in the event.

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Community Colleges Frank Chong provided the opening keynote address. He applauded Colorado for its efforts toward meeting the president's 2020 College Completion Goal. He added that Colorado's strategic plan for higher education, The Degree Dividend, is a straightforward assessment of both Colorado's higher education system and the adjustments required to meet the needs of a rapidly growing and changing state. Chong outlined the administration's support for community colleges as evidenced by the \$17.3 million Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grant that Colorado recently was awarded. He also noted that Colorado is part of the Complete College America initiative.

## Postsecondary Institutions Encouraged to Apply for Student Aid Experiments

The U.S. Department of Education has invited postsecondary institutions participating in *Higher Education Act (HEA)*-authorized student aid programs to apply for [Experimental Sites Initiative](#) grants. Under *HEA* waiver authority, each grantee will test whether proposed changes to current requirements improve federal student aid program administration. Substantiated improvements would provide ED with a rationale to consider changing statutory or regulatory provisions.

OVAE encourages adult education and CTE programs in postsecondary institutions to develop experiments. Of interest to underserved learners:

1. *Experiment 1—Pell Grant program eligibility of students with bachelor's degrees who enroll in career programs.* HEA provides that students who have a bachelor's degree are not eligible for federal Pell grants, so they may not benefit from short-term vocational training when they are underemployed or unemployed. Experiment 1 provides a limited eligibility waiver for such students. The Department is interested in applications that include legal U.S. immigrant students who were trained as professionals and are seeking credentials to fill skilled positions in the U.S.
2. *Experiment 2—Pell Grant program eligibility of students enrolled in certain short-term training programs (e.g., career pathway programs).* HEA provides eligibility to academic programs of a specific duration as eligible Federal Pell Grant Programs. Eligibility for short-term training programs would allow under- and unemployed individuals to obtain industry relevant training. Experiment 2 waives the program eligibility requirement.

Letters of application from eligible institutions must be submitted to: [experimentalsites@ed.gov](mailto:experimentalsites@ed.gov) by Dec. 12, 2011. Questions may be addressed to Warren Farr at 202-377-4380 or [Warren.Farr@ed.gov](mailto:Warren.Farr@ed.gov).

## HOLD THE DATE

Under the *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV or Perkins Act)*, the Department intends to award a new contract to an institution of higher education, a public or private nonprofit organization or agency, or a consortium of such institutions, organizations, or agencies to establish a national research center for career and technical education. Section 114(d) (4)(5) of *Perkins IV* authorizes the secretary of education, after consulting with the states, to establish a center to carry out scientifically based research and evaluation, and to conduct dissemination and training activities consistent with the purpose of the act. ED is currently engaged in market research to identify potential offerors, clarify OVAE's requirements, and remove barriers to maximize competition. Interested parties are invited to participate in a webinar on Dec. 1, 2011, at 1 p.m. ET, when ED will share its vision and goals for the procurement. A draft Performance-Work Statement will be available shortly.