

OVAE CONNECTION



OVAE Welcomes Robin A. Utz

Robin A. Utz recently joined OVAE's Division of Academic and Technical Education (DATE) team as chief of the College and Career Transitions branch. Her staff administers national discretionary programs and initiatives that support program development and innovation in CTE to increase student achievement, close the achievement gap, and prepare all high school students for transitions to postsecondary education and careers.

Prior to joining OVAE, Utz served as assistant director of the Career, Standards and Assessment Services team at the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE). Her responsibilities included providing leadership for K–12 schools to develop and implement a system of quality career and technical education. She worked to develop and implement policy initiatives that reflected a progressive agenda to ensure all students would achieve challenging academic and technical standards and be prepared for college and careers. Her most recent role included working collaboratively with other CTE state directors and leaders on important initiatives, such as developing technical skill assessments and rigorous programs of study.

Utz's professional career includes roles as a family and consumer sciences teacher, FCCLA advisor, and KSDE education program consultant for CTE programs. She was the 2011 recipient of the Champions of Digital Literacy Award sponsored by Certiport. Nominated by colleagues, peers, and students, Utz is a past recipient of several professional association awards. She has served on numerous committees and held elected offices in professional associations at state and national levels. She has a bachelor's degree in home economics education and a master's degree in secondary education, both from Kansas State University.

Next Generation Learning Challenges Announces Wave III Funding Opportunities to Improve College Readiness and Completion for Adult Learners

Next Generation Learning Challenges ([NGLC](#)) is a collaborative, multi-year initiative created to address the barriers to educational innovation. It taps the potential of technology to dramatically improve college readiness and completion in the United States, particularly for low-income young adults, by identifying promising technology solutions. NGLC is led by [EDUCAUSE](#) in partnership with [the League for Innovation](#) in the Community College, the International Association for K-12 Online Learning ([iNACOL](#)), and the Council of Chief State School Officers ([CCSSO](#)). Funding is being provided by the Bill & Melinda Gates [Foundation](#) and the William and Flora Hewlett [Foundation](#).

Wave III of NGLC funding was launched in October 2011, and focuses on the development of new blended learning models, featuring two separate Requests for Proposals: [Wave IIIa](#): Breakthrough School Models for College Readiness and [Wave IIIb](#): Breakthrough Models for College Completion. The selection process involves two steps: An initial application and a longer, more detailed, full proposal from selected applicants. Initial applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until June 8, 2012. **Deadlines for applications are Feb. 9, 2012 and June 8, 2012.**

This third wave of NGLC grants will provide support to educators and innovators who have a coherent vision for highly engaging learning pathways that span secondary school through postsecondary completion, and that will prepare students for economic, social, and civic success. NGLC will be seeking approaches that can help all students—but especially low-income students and students of color—develop the skills and knowledge they need to lead successful lives. The initiative will be looking for models that have clear, sustainable expansion or adoption plans.

Interested parties, including adult education applicants, are encouraged to review all of the applicant information for [Wave III proposals](#), including instructions, key timelines and deadlines, and NGLC's intellectual property policy.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for 2012–13 Released

ED's Office of Federal Student Aid released its *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA) for award year 2012–13 on Jan. 1, 2012. The updated FAFSA may be found at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>. As of Dec. 4, 2011, some 19.9 million FAFSAs had been submitted for award year 2011–12. For more information, please visit: <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/contact.htm>.