The Oregon Career and Technical Education Study

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Acknowledgments

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Executive Summary

Oregon educators, policymakers, and business people are working together to increase the number and quality of Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs in secondary and postsecondary institutions. CTE is an integral component of Oregon’s education and workforce development system and prepares students for careers in areas ranging from the arts and communication to business and management to industrial and engineering systems, to name a few. CTE contributes heavily to preparing Oregonians for high-skill, high-wage, and high-demand careers—exactly the type of occupations the state hopes to attract and expand over the next several decades.

Oregonians need both theoretical and applied skills to reach their full potential as students, workers, and community members—skills they can acquire only by exposure to both academic and technical curriculum. High-quality CTE programs, accessible throughout the state, are essential if the state hopes to fulfill its workforce, education, and economic development goals.

Knowing this, the state is asking: What does Oregon need to do to achieve more and stronger CTE programs that are accessible to all Oregonians? The answer is not simple, but it is within reach: Oregon has opportunities to address gaps in its administrative, delivery, and funding systems, and in doing so, strengthen and expand its CTE system.

This report, The Oregon Career and Technical Education Study, explores the current state of Oregon’s CTE system and draws on promising administrative, delivery, and funding practices in seven states—California, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Nebraska, Utah, and Washington—to provide Oregon with options designed to promote the evolution of the state’s CTE system. This report is the product of a directive by the Oregon Legislature to the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and was guided by a Task Force of representatives from secondary and postsecondary education, human services, employment, workforce development, and private-sector business.

Oregon’s CTE Administrative Structure

The State Board of Education (SBE) oversees CTE in the pre-kindergarten through 12th-grade system and in community colleges and also supervises the state’s private career school authorization and licensure process. The State Board of Higher Education (SBHE) oversees the Oregon University System (OUS), while private colleges
and universities have individual boards that govern their operation. The Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) and apprenticeship committees are responsible for apprenticeship programs in the state.

The SBE’s joint oversight of secondary education and community colleges encourages alignment between those two education sectors, and the Board’s intimate knowledge of the strengths and challenges of both systems allows it to promote a cohesive approach to CTE policymaking across K–14 education. And the state’s established CTE Network, which brings together representatives from local secondary and postsecondary agencies with ODE and the Oregon Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD) staff, provides a forum for open communication, consistent messaging, and input from state and local education administrators.

However, while K–14 CTE administrative ties may be well established, greater administrative collaboration is needed among K–12 and community colleges and all the other CTE providers in the state: universities, private colleges, apprenticeship programs, and private career schools. High school students still have difficulty transferring credits earned in Tech Prep programs through one community college to another across the state; community college students cannot count on being able to transfer credit across colleges and universities; and secondary students are not always fully prepared to meet the demands and requirements of postsecondary education, even when they have earned a high school diploma.

**Recommendation:** Establish and expand formal and informal administrative partnerships that reach beyond K–12 and community colleges to include private and public colleges and universities, apprenticeship programs, and private career schools.

- Expand all existing statewide CTE articulation agreements to include private and public four-year colleges and universities.

- Encourage regional CTE coordinators and community college deans with CTE responsibility to establish or expand working relationships with private and public colleges, apprenticeship programs, and career schools. That effort may include asking representatives from these institutions and programs in each region to attend meetings to ensure their initiatives and issues are represented as part of their region’s approach to CTE.

- Invite representatives from public and private four-year institutions, apprenticeship programs, and private career schools to attend the statewide CTE Network meetings as regular members. Identify roles for the representatives to ensure that meetings provide opportunities for all sectors to be fully engaged.
Oregon CTE Delivery System

CTE is offered throughout the Oregon education continuum. It begins with exploratory coursework in middle schools, continues with more advanced coursework in high schools, and leads to apprenticeship, certificate, and associate’s degree programs in community colleges; credentialing through private career schools; and bachelor’s and graduate degree programs at private and public colleges and universities.

Oregon has embarked on a comprehensive effort to deliver an integrated, articulated set of CTE programs through Career Pathways, designed to offer multiple entry and exit points throughout programs aligned across the education continuum; through Tech Prep and Dual Credit, providing high school students with an opportunity to earn college credits for completing advanced secondary coursework; and through Expanded Options, allowing 11th- and 12th-graders to earn concurrent high school and college credit through early college entry. The state has also begun to develop an integrated Programs of Study system, which represents a link between secondary and postsecondary programs within Career Pathways. Administrators and educators have successfully built consensus around four key elements of every Program of Study: Alignment and Articulation, integrated CTE and academic Content and Standards, Accountability and Assessment, and Student Support Services.

Oregon’s secondary and community college systems are engaged in cooperative CTE delivery and have been successful in developing and disseminating a consistent vision of an aligned education system that contributes to students’ education, career, and life success. Oregon is now challenged with reinforcing and expanding its ongoing efforts to align and articulate CTE programs and to increase student access to those programs in secondary schools and postsecondary institutions.

**Recommendation 1:** Provide targeted technical assistance to support the design and expansion of Programs of Study.

- Identify existing, standards-based curricular resources that might be adapted for state use. Examples of such resources include Project Lead the Way or the Math-in-CTE program, which has been successfully piloted by the Lane Education Service District.

- Create and pilot a statewide model for connecting academic knowledge with technical skills identified in the Oregon Skill Sets.

- Provide targeted professional development to equip academic and CTE instructors, at both the secondary and postsecondary levels, with the skills they need to create and support the development of Programs of Study.
Recommendation 2: Assist students in reaching their goals and preparing for the workplace by expanding advanced skill training opportunities for secondary students.

- Provide incentives for neighboring high schools and school districts to coordinate with one another and with community colleges and other workforce development agencies to reduce duplication of programs and leverage capacity at existing facilities.

- Relocate CTE instructional equipment among high schools and colleges and arrange for coordinated purchasing among regional partners to avoid unnecessary duplication of services across sites.

- Encourage the development and evaluate the outcomes of charter schools, magnet schools, and academy programs that provide integrated academic and CTE instruction that aligns with the Programs of Study model.

- Coordinate with labor organizations and unions to increase opportunities for students to enter apprenticeships in high-wage, high-skill, and high-demand careers.

- Co-locate secondary and postsecondary programs in satellite sites in order to share resources, particularly in rural areas where access to specialized training and instructional equipment is limited.

- Improve career-related learning experiences by developing criteria that define high-quality career-related learning standards for students in different grades and by creating tools and material supports that schools and their business partners can use when developing programs.

Recommendation 3: Use data to measure how Programs of Study contribute to student success.

- Review existing measures and, where necessary, create new data elements to enable researchers to assess program outcomes accurately.

- Communicate results to the field to support local educators in their efforts to improve programs. State administrators should review program performance data on an annual basis and publish their findings regarding promising practices and comparisons of program performance.

- Provide resources to state agencies to support and sustain data collection efforts.
Recommendation 4: Promote the adoption of statewide articulation agreements to provide high school and college students with greater flexibility when making transitions among institutions.

- Develop statewide articulation agreements that ensure students enrolled in a Program of Study in any Oregon high school possess the educational knowledge and technical skills that will prepare them to enter the postsecondary component of an associated Program of Study offered in any Oregon postsecondary institution. Articulation agreements should guarantee that the secondary coursework students take as part of an approved Program of Study will be accepted and awarded postsecondary credit when appropriate.

Oregon CTE Funding

Local and state funds support CTE programs in middle and high schools, community colleges, and public colleges and universities. Federal grant funds—through the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006—supplement state and local funds by supporting innovative CTE initiatives in high schools and community colleges.

CTE is more expensive to provide than many other forms of instruction as a result of several factors, the most influential of which is the additional staffing needed to support the smaller class sizes required for safety and instructional capacity (Klein, 2001). Other factors include the number and type of introductory and advanced CTE courses offered, the equipment used for instruction, and the number of students who enroll in CTE coursework.

Oregon is one of a few states that does not earmark state resources for CTE in K–12 school districts. Community colleges and school districts have discretion over how State General Funds are spent and can direct their appropriations to different programs in whatever proportion meets their local priorities and needs. That flexibility has allowed administrators to support and expand CTE programs, but, at the same time, has promoted different levels of access to CTE throughout the state.

In recognition of the higher cost of delivering CTE services, many states have adopted secondary education funding formulas that provide supplemental resources for CTE. Adopting categorical state funding for CTE may eventually be warranted in Oregon; however, the state’s current CTE alignment initiatives and the lack of information on current CTE program spending make it difficult to determine if a categorical funding adjustment is needed, and if so, what level of investment is necessary and how it would affect CTE programs and outcomes.
Accordingly, to address state funding needs in the short term, the Oregon Legislature may seek to **promote system development** by making a grant investment in CTE services.

**Recommendation 1:** Establish a grant program to support regional development of CTE Programs of Study.

- Provide seed funds with a grant of $3,000,000 to $4,000,000 in the 2009–11 budget. This would allow the state to provide a base-funding amount per region, with remaining resources allocated based on criteria that further the development of Programs of Study, as determined by ODE, CCWD, and local education agencies.

- Ensure that funds are targeted on specific needs by establishing a set of grant expectations, including data and financial reporting and evaluation. Applicants would also need to provide assurances that program funds will be used to supplement, not supplant, existing expenditures and to describe steps that would be taken to sustain project work once grant funding lapses.

**Recommendation 2:** Upgrade and leverage CTE equipment resources.

- Allocate between $1,000,000 and $1,500,000 on a competitive basis to support equipment upgrades at high schools and community colleges. Limit grants to partnerships of secondary and postsecondary agencies that demonstrate how proposed equipment upgrades or purchases reinforce or extend the development of Programs of Study.

- Leverage additional resources by assigning priority to grant requests from regional partnerships that secure matching funds from industry organizations representing high-wage, high-demand occupations.

**Recommendation 3:** Quantify the added cost of providing CTE services in school districts that have successfully implemented the Programs of Study.

- Identify high school and postsecondary partnerships that have successfully implemented regionwide Programs of Study and collect expenditure data (labor and capital) to quantify the added cost of offering CTE instruction.

**Conclusion**

Oregon’s CTE system—a vital component of the state’s Education Enterprise and workforce development systems—is ready to enter the next phase of its evolution. Administrators, educators, and employers are embracing partnerships and programs
that cross the traditional lines between education sectors and are seeking out ways to improve their programs, engage their students, and demonstrate the positive impact that CTE has on people, communities, and the state.

This report provides options designed to support the growth and expansion of high-quality CTE programs throughout Oregon. Investing attention and resources into CTE will result in substantial returns in workforce development and educational attainment. Delaying will not result in the complete eradication of CTE, nor will it eliminate the benefits that CTE already provides to some Oregonians. Delaying, however, will restrict the scope and quality of CTE programs throughout the state and limit the contribution that CTE could make to achieving the state’s workforce and education goals.