

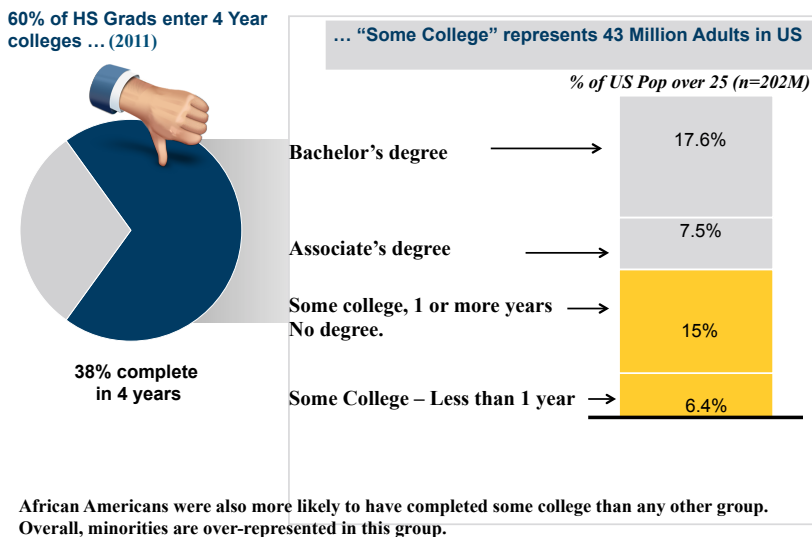
Supporting Career-Technical Education and Workforce Development

The Need

Our nation is confronting a growing challenge. Once the dominant economic force in the world, we currently face a flattened or “tilted” world in which companies and jobs continue to move to other countries as a consequence of the globalization of industries and employers’ need for skilled workers. Our school systems must become more agile and continually adapt as we educate a more diverse student population and accommodate extremes of need and opportunity not imagined when the current systems were designed. One only has to look at Google Glass and the fact that an iPhone app can translate 95% of languages spoken globally to understand that the world is not just changing rapidly, it is changing exponentially. Our students must not only be able to grow with our evolving world; they also need to be architects of this evolution.

Unfortunately, the 2009 US Census paints a disturbing trend when looking at educational attainment in our country.

Education Attainment in US – 2009 Census



As a result of these changing economic and social conditions, there is an explicit and urgent demand from state and local superintendents and school leaders that we help support the preparation of all students for success in four-year colleges, two-year colleges, industry certification programs, and careers.

Design with the end in mind

“Left to themselves, community college students have little clarity about what programs and courses will bring them success. So leaders and staff at excellent community colleges know that it is up to them to do everything they can to ensure that what students learn and the credentials they complete lead to jobs that offer not just strong wages but room for growth.” Joshua S. Wyner, What Excellent Community Colleges Do

One meaningful way to increase completion is to create scaffolded programs from high school that prepare students with technical and professional skills for in-demand employment that leads to career opportunities paying a family-sustaining wage.

There are some positive developments that are already underway in the CTE arena by a few players that set the stage for enhancements in the quality of teaching and learning. Additionally, a number of important new state laws and initiatives present an opportunity to reshape and bring new rigor to CTE:

- **Texas HB 5 and HB 2201:** A student may earn an “endorsement” on his/her diploma by completing the curricular requirements for selected fields, including STEM, business and industry, and others.
- **North Carolina SB 14:** “The State Board of Education shall establish, implement, and determine the impact of adding (i) college, (ii) career, and (iii) college and career endorsements to high school diplomas to encourage students to obtain requisite job skills and to reduce the need for remedial education in institutions of higher education.”

- The State Board of Education of Virginia has approved more than 200 credentialing examinations, and the number of students earning industry credentials has more than doubled from 2009 to 2012. Approximately 40,000 students will take the Virginia Workplace Readiness Assessment (WRA), which is one of the assessments allowed as a graduation assessment. Nevada is also requiring the WRA of all CTE students and Maine and Idaho are pilot testing.
- The Center for Advanced Technical Studies in District 5 of Lexington and Richmond Counties (SC) provides the most state-of-the-art CTE program in the country, according to many. This school offers 17 CTE programs ranging from aerospace technology, cyber security, biomedical sciences and technology to culinary arts. Students are going directly into the workforce, the community college and 4-year colleges, including the Ivy League schools.
- Some states are aligning Common Career Technical Core Standards to their state standards and to industry-sponsored certifications.
- At the federal level, there is also renewed energy around promoting sound principles for improved CTE. The U.S. Department of Education recently released a new Blueprint for CTE for a reauthorized Perkins Act shaped by the four core principles of **alignment, collaboration, accountability and innovation.**¹

During the early years of vocational education (1917–1968), the emphasis was on expanding vocational programs to provide a trained semiskilled workforce to meet the needs of industry (and even prior to the 20th century, the land grant colleges were established as what we now know as CTE programs). Between 1968 and 1990, ensuring equal access to vocational education for disadvantaged and special needs populations was the priority. Most recently, the emphasis is on improving the academic and technical quality of programs in the form of CTE along with strengthened performance standards to ensure program quality.

Despite optimism that CTE programs are moving in the right direction in terms of growth of participation, quality of instruction, and alignment of programs to industry needs, there are still fundamental and important challenges. In spite of some gains, we do know that too many students are leaving high school unprepared for the challenges of college and careers.

Role of Cross & Jofus. How are we positioned to respond?

While every school is different, there is a core set of conditions that needs to exist for change to occur successfully and in a sustainable way for CTE students:

These are:

1. Support enhanced rigor and relevance in CTE programs of study, including:
 - a. Relevant and rigorous curricula that scaffold to third-party, validated, and recognized credentials;
 - b. Teachers who are certified and whose skills are current in the industry certification area in which they are teaching; and
 - c. Rich opportunities for work-based learning experiences.
2. Integrate into programs and curricula non-academic, cognitive competencies that teach transferable knowledge and skills required for varied career and college options and marketability - supports that promote the learning of critical mindsets and beliefs that students need to thrive in work and life.

¹ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education. *Investing in America's Future: A Blueprint for Transforming Career and Technical Education. Transforming Career and Technical Education*, Washington, D.C., 2012.