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ABSTRACT

The Louisiana Program Plan for the Administration of Vocational Education calls for assessing the state's progress in meeting the sex equity purposes of the Carl Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act and evaluating the effectiveness of programs and activities supported by the need for sex equity. Criteria for selecting sex equity measures and standards include the following: (1) the measures serve both directly to measure sex equity and indirectly to measure results of institutional and system practices for sex equity; (2) the measures indicate equity between genders, as opposed to efforts to upgrade programs as a whole; (3) the measures encompass the total range of vocational educational efforts; (4) the measures apply to both secondary systems and postsecondary institutions; and (5) statistical data collection by institutions and systems need not be altered. Measures that can be used for assessment include rates of enrollment of nontraditional gender students in vocational programs, rates of program completion for such students, rates of job placement for the students, and other rates of student achievement such as skill achievement. The plan should foster positive steps to reach the minimum standards by the end of the funding period of the act. Measures focus on progress toward sex equity, not comparisons among educational units, and where units are falling short, positive suggestions should be made to assist institutions in overcoming deficiencies and implementing strategies to attract, teach, and place nontraditional gender students. (Contains 26 references.) (KC)

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Measures and Minimum Standards for Achieving Sex Equity in
Louisiana Vocational Education: A Position Paper

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Measures and Minimum Standards for Achieving Sex Equity in
Louisiana Vocational Education: A Position Paper

Federal and state regulations call for measures and standards to evaluate vocational education in the area of sex equity (Klein, 1986). The Carl Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act (U. S. Congress, 1990) aims for an increase in national productivity through the upgrade of vocational programs and the increased participation of under-represented groups. This includes the increased vocational participation of men and women, especially single-parents, displaced homemakers, and other disadvantaged persons, in the higher-level technical fields of employment. To better achieve this and its other goals, the Act calls for a definition of measures and minimum standards for measuring the achievement of purposes of the Act.

The Louisiana Program Plan for the Administration of Vocational Education (the State Plan) (Coordinating Unit, Office of Vocational Education, 1991) further calls for "an assessment of the State progress in meeting the purpose of this Act with regard to overcoming sex discrimination and sex stereotyping" (p. 27) and "evaluating the effectiveness of programs and activities supported by such (sex equity, single parents, displaced homemakers, and single pregnant women) funds" (p. 28). Also, in its plan, the State assures that "it will institutionalize gender equity in all vocational education programs" and that "individuals who are members of special populations will be provided with equal access to recruitment, enrollment, and placement activities" (p. 31).

These assurances, in part, are a basis for the formulation of the proposed measures and standards. The following rationale explains and supports the selection of sex equity measures and standards.

Criteria that underlie the selection of these measures include the following: (1) The proposed outcome measures serve both directly to measure sex equity and indirectly to measure results of institutional and system practices for sex equity. (2) The measures indicate equity between genders, as opposed to efforts to upgrade programs, as a whole. (3) The measures encompass the total range of vocational educational efforts from pre-enrollment linkages with other educators, students, parents, and businesses through post-enrollment job placement or further training. (4) The measures apply to both secondary systems and postsecondary institutions. (5) Statistical data collection by institutions and systems need not be altered, merely reported differently--so that data collection difficulties are minimized.

By definition, the concept of "equity" in education parallels, but differs, from that of "equality" (Woods, 1989). Equality refers to equal access to enroll, get employment, get equal pay, etc. Although, it requires the removal of discriminatory practices, equal access may not be adequate to reverse historical imbalances in education and employment. Equity, on the other hand, focuses on justice and fairness; it includes affirmative practices to seek increases in positive outcomes of educational experiences that may be essential to achieve equality (Wood, 1989).

Sex (or gender) equity in vocational education describes "an environment in which individuals can consider options and make choices based on their abilities and talents, not on the basis of stereotypes and biased expectations, ... enter, participate fully in and benefit from those programs without regard to gender" (Bitters, 1988, p. 234). By definition, gender equity in vocational education requires both the absence of sex bias and stereotyping and the use of affirmative practices--to equate the occupational training opportunities and outcomes of men and women in the key areas of vocational education: recruitment, retention, and placement.

Deaux and Lewis (1984) identified that gender stereotypes are formed by interrelationships or associations between content-specific beliefs and gender labels (i.e., "male", "female"). In this view, occupations are a content area and occupational stereotypes may result in personal development from multiple and complex associations between gender and jobs. In stereotypes, the association of particular roles to a specific gender make occupations gender-specific.

Manifestations of stereotype include sex dominance in educational programs and employment. These forms of stereotyping are readily obvious and impactful, limiting the opportunities of both men and women (Burge, 1990). Vocational education, particularly, by definition of its preparation for life roles in employment (National Association of Vocational Education, 1989), is strategic to the promotion or reduction of stereotypes. Frequent

and forceful examples of non-traditional gender/occupation combinations are needed to form new non-stereotypical associations to occupations. The formation of new dual-gender/occupational associations (Lockheed, 1985) are possible through sex equity efforts in vocational education.

The gender "integration" of all vocational programs is proposed as the expectation from sex equity efforts of the Carl Perkins Act. The Minnesota State Commission on the Economic Status of Women (1986) defined gender "integration" as enrollment consisting of a minimum of 20% of the non-traditional gender; some other groups, including Louisiana's Sex Equity office, use 25% as a point of concern. Consequently, this paper proposes, for non-traditional gender enrollment in all vocational programs, the use of 25% as the goal and of 20% as the minimum standard to be reached by June 1996. The use of this minimum standard assumes that institutions and systems will revise programs and utilize affirmative recruitment practices sufficient to achieve this standard within the five-year period of this Act. As this occurs, both men and women with attractions to the occupation will consider participation without social stigma, leading to increased gender equity. Annual increases in enrollment should indicate progression toward this goal:

Measure 1: Rates of enrollment

By June 30, 1996, each institution will aim to have a minimum of 20% of non-traditional gender students enrolled in each of its vocational programs. Increases (leading up to this minimum) are expected for each year of funding--

By June 30, 1993, a minimum enrollment of 5% of the non-traditional gender;
By June 30, 1994, a minimum of 10%;
By June 30, 1995, a minimum of 15%;
By June 30, 1996, a minimum of 20%.

Entry into the system is an important first step, which must be followed by support systems to retain the student through program completion. Goodwin (1989) identified the major problem of national vocational education as that students leave the system before receiving in-depth training. The lower educational aspirations and lower high school achievements of students who enter non-baccalaureate programs (National Association of Vocational Education, 1988) suggest greater difficulties in academic adjustment and a greater likelihood for leaving prior to completion of programs (Astin, 1982). Disadvantaged populations (such as low-income, single-parent, pregnant teen, and displaced homemaker students), particularly, by their non-traditional circumstances (Metzner, 1987) are more likely to experience difficulties. In addition to transitional difficulties, non-traditional gender students may also experience biases in curricula, textbooks, classroom climate, and other aspects of a program (Lockheed & Klein, 1985).

The Carl Perkins Act places a priority on vocational training for special populations (U. S. Congress, 1990). As well as funding the recruitment of special populations, the legislation recognizes the disadvantages of these groups in educational settings and allows use of funds for services that aim to equalize opportunities for success. In serving non-traditional-gender and other

disadvantaged students, it is desirable that an institution or system provide affirmative actions to compensate for student disadvantages (Wood, 1989).

Indicators of institutional efforts toward sex equity are numerous. They include such attitudinal and behavioral outcomes as (1) special recruitment strategies, (2) removal of gender bias from program publicity, textbooks, instructional materials, testing, classroom environment, referrals, internships, placement, etc.; (3) infusion of information, mentors, assessments, programs, services, employer contacts, etc. that promote productivity in education and employment (Carelli, 1988; Kaser, Matthews, & McCune, 1978; Klein, 1985; Pottker & Fishel, 1977; Sadker & Sadker, 1982; Vetter, Burkhardt, & Sechler, 1980).

When sex equity is achieved in educational environments, learning outcomes of enrolled students can be expected to be equal between genders. Consequently, measures of learning outcomes (such as skills assessment ratings, grades, program completion rates, placement rates, job performance ratings) show no disparities based on gender.

The State Plan allows institutions to use either or both Basic Grant or competitive-application funds to provide institution-wide affirmative actions for gender equity. Recognizing the availability of funding, it is desirable that each educational unit aim for maximizing learning outcomes of both genders in all programs. Since at this time, the Office of Vocational Education annually collects completion rates and placement rates by program

of enrollment from all funded systems and institutions, this paper proposes the use of these measures. A review of institutional reporting shows that continuing progress in computerization of records allows for greater ease in aggregating data by gender. Some revisions on the requested reporting form, however, are necessary to request completion and placement rates by gender.

Burge (1991) and others recommend that, as an institutional affirmative action, non-traditional gender students be assisted to excel in programs and employment. The higher level performance of the non-traditional gender will facilitate the formation of non-stereotypical associations and will provide role models for other non-traditional students to enter and achieve in programs. Consequently, if an institution aim during the period of this Act to help non-traditional genders excel, it is reasonable to expect at-least-equal learning outcomes as a minimum standard. Therefore, this paper proposes that gender-equality in completion rates and placement rates serve as a minimum standard of sex equity.

Measure 2: Rates of program completion

For each year of funding and collectively by vocational program, each institution/system will aim to have, for students of the non-traditional gender, a minimum of equal the program completion rates of traditional-gender students.

For post-secondary institutions, the ultimate goal of vocational education is satisfactory job placement in the area of skills training (National Assessment of Vocational Education, 1988). For secondary institutions, the goal of vocational education may be either the same or satisfactory enrollment in an

advanced post-secondary training program. For brevity, either outcome of secondary systems may be considered as "placement".

Measure 3: Rates of placement

For each year of funding and collectively by program, each institution/system will aim to have, for students of the non-traditional gender, a minimum of equal the job placement rates of traditional-gender students.

Additionally, other measures of progress and achievement that, in the future, may be collected on a systematic basis by systems and institutions are also recommended as measures of sex equity. The following are recommendations that are conditional to the availability of such measures.

Conditional Measures: Other rates of student achievement

If measures of student performance in vocational programs are collected statewide by the Office of Vocational Education, sex equity in student achievement rates should also be expected: For each year of funding, collectively by program, students of the non-traditional gender should have a minimum of equal measures of the skills/achievements of traditional-gender students.

If measures of salary and job performance ratings are collected by the Office of Vocational Education, sex equity in salary and employer satisfaction should also be expected: For each year of funding, collectively by program, students of the non-traditional gender should have a minimum of equal measures of salary and employer satisfaction as of the traditional gender students.

Equity standards, at all levels--federal, state, local--facilitate the achievement of equity (Klein, 1986). Clear definitions of the objectives of vocational programs make possible the achievement of program goals (U. S. Congress, 1989). Consequently, these minimum standards are suggested as objectives

or ideals for institutions in order that sex equity may be promoted. Accepting this ideal implies that the institution/system will take strong affirmative actions to overcome barriers and establish practices that will lead toward the minimum standards of these measures.

Evaluation models of educational programs should include considerations of contexts and treatments as well as goals and outcome measures (Cronbach, 1982). Objective outcome measures, alone, fail to identify special conditions that limit achievement and impinge on the treatment. Surveys of institutional practices and problems, student characteristics, student perceptions of experiences, and other qualitative data are important contributions to measure progression toward sex equity. These additional measures are also recommended.

Additionally, barriers that are either beyond the control of institutions or deeply embedded in traditions may limit institutional achievements. The following are examples of variables, which, when extreme, may serve as negative forces: regional economic conditions, socio-economic student characteristics, community conditions that promote stereotypes, degree of stereotypes at prior levels of schooling, and special conditions that limit intervention at that level. Also, some programs, such as diesel mechanics with heavier machinery than auto mechanics, may attract fewer women than the comparable program(s). Such and other barriers pose special challenges to institutions and may reduce effects of affirmative action practices. These

barriers, identified and documented by institutions, should be considered along with outcome measures and institutional efforts.

This position paper holds to the ideal that positive steps can and should be taken to reach the minimum standards by the end of the funding period of this Act. Measures focus on progress toward sex equity, not comparisons among educational units. Recognizing the many barriers that may be faced by institutions suggests that efforts toward achieving these minimum standards be acknowledged. Consequently, as well as the examination of the measures, the positive efforts of institutions should be examined. Where barriers are stronger than the efforts, positive suggestions should be made to assist institutions in overcoming deficiencies and implementing strategies to attract, teach, and place the non-traditional gender.

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