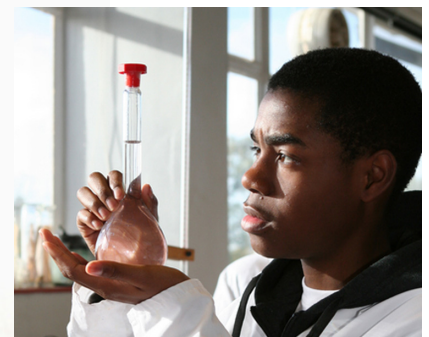


COMPREHENSIVE CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR ILLINOIS:

Findings and Recommendations of the Illinois Career Development Task Force



- Task Force Formation and Charge
- The Call for Enhanced Career Development
- Why Career Development?
- How Education Gaps Affect Illinois Citizens
- Career Development in Illinois: Past, Present, and Future
- Vision, Guiding Principles, and Recommendations



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COMPREHENSIVE CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR ILLINOIS:

Findings and Recommendations of the Illinois Career Development Task Force

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Executive Summary

The Career Development Task Force believes the state of Illinois should enhance alignment between career development systems and education and training to prepare a more highly skilled and productive workforce. The time is now to move precipitously to implement a comprehensive career development system for Illinois.

Illinois is poised to make lasting change to its P-20 education system. While past reforms have offered incremental change, current system-wide initiatives promise breakthrough change for the entire state. Fundamental to the future is a comprehensive career development system that emphasizes enhanced career awareness and preparation for youth and adults. Through those career development opportunities, more students will experience positive outcomes that will benefit themselves, their families and communities as well as the workforce and economy.

What is at stake? More importantly, what is the cost of doing nothing? If Illinois continues with a fragmented approach to career development where there is little commitment or consistency in practice, minimal coordination of existing resources, and minimal accountability for career outcomes, the state can expect students' performance to be the same – and worsen. The 12% dropout rate for high school students, the failure of 40% of college students to complete their degrees, and the nearly universal complaint by employers that new employees lack necessary workplace skills will undoubtedly continue to erode Illinois' ability to compete in the global marketplace. Now is the right time – the window of opportunity – to provide the leadership and coordinated direction to ensure universal accessibility to a comprehensive system of career development that can help students and adults make informed career choices.

In January 2007, the Illinois Workforce Investment Board (IWIB) established the Illinois Career Development Task Force chaired by J. Mark Williams, Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). The Task Force included representatives from all three of the state's educational agencies – the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), and the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE). Also involved were the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), and the Illinois Workforce Investment Board (IWIB). Practitioners participating in the Task Force represented K-12 education, community colleges, regional Education for Employment (EFE) systems, adult education and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) providers, four-year colleges and universities, and business and industry.

The Task Force met five times between February 28 and November 5, 2007, beginning with Task Force members considering recommendations from earlier Critical Skills Shortages Initiative (CSSI) task forces. Plus, the group researched other state and national career development initiatives to enhance the depth and breadth of its efforts. This report provides major findings that substantiate the positive impact of career development, including evidence pertaining to youth and adults. The report includes a vision statement, guiding principles, a set of recommendations that support implementation of a comprehensive career development system, and next steps.

The recommendations are organized in three sections designed to be implemented in phases:

Phase I – Enhancing Coordination and Increasing Visibility

- Improve the recognition and coordination of existing career development resources and services
- Recognize and publicize the state’s existing web-accessible career information system
- Integrate national career development standards with the state’s learning standards
- Support enhanced networking among state and local leaders
- Increase funding to support Phase I dissemination and enhanced usage of services and resources

Phase II – Enhancing Implementation of Innovative Practices

- Capitalize on the state’s current efforts to implement the federal Carl D. Perkins Programs of Study
- Require Individualized Career Plans (ICPs) for all students
- Engage employers, educators, and workforce training providers in innovative pilot projects
- Introduce the Career Readiness Certificate (ACT) into the state’s assessment strategy
- Enhance instructor, administrator, and counselor training at all levels of the P-20 system
- Require portable educational and career portfolios (including electronic portfolios)
- Enhance state funding to support Phase II

Phase III – Building in Quality, Enhancing Opportunities

- Pilot and implement “smart” career development systems to compliment web-based programs, resources, and services
- Conduct systematic evaluation of the impact of career development on student, program, employer, community, and societal outcomes
- Continue to assess state and local governance and infrastructure to ensure policies and practices that benefit all students.

Introduction

Currently, Illinois has a window of opportunity to make lasting change to its P-20 (primary through grade 20) education system. While past reforms have created incremental change, current system-wide initiatives promise breakthrough change for the entire state. Improved coordination, better alignment, and integrated strategies provide the basis for groundbreaking advancements. Fundamental to the future is the integration of a comprehensive career development system that emphasizes career awareness for youth and adults. Through enhanced career preparation, students will have increased opportunity to experience numerous positive outcomes, and their successes will benefit their families and communities as well as the workforce and economy.

In January 2007, the Illinois Workforce Investment Board (IWIB) established the Illinois Career Development Task Force involving a broad-based constituency of local education practitioners and university researchers, state-level administrators and policy analysts, and business and industry leaders. Recognizing the importance of providing leadership in this critical area, the group quickly reached consensus on the importance of a comprehensive career development system that spans all levels of P-20 education as well as the workforce, including K-12 education, community colleges, four-year colleges and universities, economic and workforce development, adult education and literacy, as well as business, industry, and labor. The Task Force considered recommendations from earlier IWIB deliberations associated with the Illinois Critical Skills Shortages Initiative¹ (CSSI). The group also researched other state and national career development initiatives to build on prior experience and enhance the depth and breadth of its work.

In the view of the Task Force, career development can and should be seen as a common denominator to connect education, industry, and government efforts into a unified approach for greater impact. After all, the bottom line for each of these primary stakeholders is the same – to positively influence the education, economic, and personal well being of youth and adults in Illinois and enhance the overall economy and social fabric that defines the well-being of the state’s citizenry.

This report summarizes major findings and recommendations of the Illinois Career Development Task Force. The first section provides background information on Task Force formation, membership, meetings, and discussion topics. The second section defines career development, based on the consensus-building process employed by the Task Force, and presents evidence of the success and limitations of past initiatives in Illinois and elsewhere in the United States. This section is followed by an examination of current gaps and calls for a coordinated system of career development in Illinois. The report concludes with recommendations, including a vision statement, guiding principles, proposed implementation strategies, and next steps.

TASK FORCE FORMATION AND CHARGE

The Illinois Career Development Task Force was chaired by J. Mark Williams, Division Administrator for Career Development and Preparation, Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). Research support and meeting facilitation was provided by Debra Bragg, Professor of higher education and Director, Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL), University of Illinois, and Julia Makela, a graduate research assistant at OCCRL and the University of Illinois Career Center. The Task Force included representatives from all three of the state’s education agencies – the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), and the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE). Other members represented the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), and the Illinois Workforce Investment Board

(IWIB). Other participants in the Task Force represented K-12 education, community colleges, regional Education for Employment (EFE) systems, adult education and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) providers, and four-year colleges and universities. Business and industry representatives were also engaged in the process. A list of Task Force members is provided in Appendix A.

The Task Force met five times between February 28 and November 5, 2007. The first meeting was held at IBHE on February 28, 2007; this meeting included a discussion of research on the impact of career development. Task Force members contributed information about past and present state of Illinois and national initiatives and explored directions for future meeting topics. The second meeting was held at Heartland Community College in Bloomington-Normal on March 28, 2007, and this meeting focused on national and state models, including the *National Career Development Guidelines*, the *Illinois Career Development K-12 Competencies and Indicators*, and the *American School Counselor Association's National Standards for Students*.² (See, for example, the national career development guidelines at: <http://www.acrnetwork.org/ncdg/documents/NCDGframework.doc>). The group defined core principles believed to be foundational to a comprehensive career development system.

The third meeting was held at the University of Illinois on April 23, 2007, and this meeting was dedicated to clarifying a vision statement and examining promising practices in Illinois and other states. This meeting resulted in the identification of components of a career development system for Illinois. The fourth meeting was held at ISBE on May 21, 2007, and this meeting focused on various scenarios and refined a set of recommendations. The fifth and final meeting was held at ISBE on Monday, November 5, 2007, to finalize the report for the IWIB presentation on December 13, 2007.

In addition to the Task Force meetings, on June 14, 2007, Julia Makela gave an interim report to the IWIB to inform the group of the Task Force's undertakings and gather initial feedback. A draft of the final report was circulated to Task Force members in late August 2007, and feedback was gathered through the third week in September 2007. Comments of Task Force

members were integrated throughout September and October; the timing of this work proved to be useful because a number of complimentary initiatives came to fruition during the fall, including legislation to create a P-20 Council.

Resources and documents used to support the Illinois Career Development Task Force are available at: <http://occr.ed.uiuc.edu/Projects/careerdev/>.

CSSI'S CALL FOR ENHANCED CAREER DEVELOPMENT

A driving force behind the Illinois Career Development Task Force's efforts was a series of industry task force reports associated with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's (DCEO) CSSI.³ Each of these reports made recommendations for "a larger effort to establish a comprehensive career development system in the schools in which individuals can explore and plan for all careers."⁴ Gaps were recognized both in individual citizen's educational preparation and the ineffectiveness of state-wide, systemic preparation opportunities in career areas that are critical to Illinois' economy. These gaps led multiple stakeholders to engage in conversations and partnerships to address educational and economic needs.

Specifically, the CSSI reports developed from three, sector-based task forces pointed to the lack of career awareness among youth and adults having a detrimental impact on preparing a qualified workforce in the healthcare, manufacturing, and transportation and logistics sectors. Recognizing the importance of enhanced career awareness among K-12 students and their parents, and among adults entering or incumbent to the workforce, all three task forces called for pilots of career awareness materials based on career clusters and national and state career development standards to be integrated into the K-12 curriculum. Models that integrate career development with academic and career and technical education (CTE) and emphasize career awareness in the early grades, career exploration at the middle and high school levels, and career preparation at the college and adult levels were recommended. Career awareness campaigns were suggested as a means to assist in generating widespread knowledge among Illinois' citizens of career opportunities linked to CSSI.

Why Career Development?

Before delving into a career development vision and recommended strategies for Illinois, the Task Force found it useful to step back to examine why the state of Illinois should engage in a P-20 career development endeavor. They examined this question from the diverse perspectives of its membership. What is career development, from the perspective of:

- individual citizens who seek and require career development services?
- education and employment professionals who desire to meet the needs of Illinois' increasingly diverse population?
- business, industry, and labor organizations that desire profitability and a healthy economy for the state?
- state educational agencies that seek to enhance access and opportunity to education and training for all of the state's citizens?

Finally, what evidence exists concerning current career development programs and services? What resources can assist the state to reach its vision of a comprehensive career development system, and how should those resources be mobilized?

DEFINING CAREER DEVELOPMENT

From the perspective of the individual, career development can be defined as “the total constellation of economic, sociological, psychological, educational, physical, and chance factors that combine to shape one's career” over a lifetime.⁵ School, work, family, and economic, cultural, and social environments all play an essential role in an individual's unique life experiences.⁶ Systemically, career development interventions (programs, services, and resources) are designed to improve individual career awareness, exploration, choice, preparation, and management.⁷ Career development is recognized as critical to helping individuals make a successful transition from one level of

education to another, from education to work, and between education and work throughout the lifespan.⁸

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Recent research shows that at all educational levels (P-20⁹) and all age levels (youth through adult), career development positively impacts academic achievement,¹⁰ career maturity,¹¹ educational motivation, coping skills, self-esteem,¹² and age-appropriate exploration and career decision-making.¹³ The benefits of career development can be linked to each life stage, beginning with the elementary grades and extending throughout a lifetime.

Early career exploration is instrumental in providing opportunities for students to gain appreciation for the connection between traditional education classes and their future careers.¹⁴ The literature provides numerous examples of middle school-level interventions that are particularly influential in promoting positive outcomes, including encouraging students to consider educational choices before making course selections in high school that may open or close doors to future educational opportunities.¹⁵ This connection between school and career adds to the students' motivation to learn in the classroom.¹⁶

The motivational benefits of career development interventions continue into high school and college. In a statewide study of Missouri high schools, the relationships between career guidance programs and student experiences were explored.¹⁷ A total of 434 counselors from a random sample of 236 high schools completed surveys regarding guidance program implementation to determine how fully the programs had been carried out at each school. Then, surveys were completed by

22,964 randomly-selected students regarding their high school experiences and preparation for the future. The data were analyzed to identify correlations between student characteristics, outcomes,

The state of Illinois lacks a clearly articulated policy on career development. Public statements from state education leaders, elected officials, and others associated with state agencies and the governor's office have been useful to identifying the problem.

and guidance program implementation, revealing that the fuller implementation of career guidance was positively correlated with positive student outcomes. At the high schools where counselors reported that guidance programs were implemented more fully, students reported (a) earning higher grades, (b) feeling better prepared for future schooling, (c) having a greater sense of belonging and safety in school, and (d) experiencing fewer interruptions by other students in the classroom and schools. Most importantly, students in high schools offering a comprehensive guidance program experienced increased motivation to engage in learning opportunities because they saw a direct connection to preparation for their futures.

A 2006 study by The Bridgespan Group, a nonprofit consulting firm, takes this discussion one step further by identifying and ranking “college-access supports,” meaning factors other than rigorous academic preparedness that influence the likelihood of earning a college degree.¹⁸ The study concluded that the two most critical supports are (a) an awareness of the link between college and career aspirations, and (b) positive attitudes toward college attendance among an individual’s closest peer group. The report recommends the creation of a college-going culture that is connected to career assessment and exploration.

Career development should address the needs of all youth, not only those who are college-bound. Students who choose to enter the workforce after high school graduation may benefit from improved career guidance most of all. Some researchers contend the need for career development is particularly great for youth who are transitioning directly from high school to work because they need to master academic and technical tasks in a short period of time (before high school graduation).¹⁹ In part due to the great variety of educational programs that attempt to prepare students for work, limited research exists on the effectiveness of many of these programs.²⁰ Yet, findings point to the importance of intentional career development interventions. For instance, one discovery-oriented interview study found that successful workplace transitions were related to a clear sense of self, career exploration, and perceived career-related supports within school, work, and family contexts.²¹ Career and technical education (CTE) transition programs, also referred to as career pathway programs, that emphasize an integrated academic and career-focused

curriculum are associated with students feeling more prepared for the transition to college and employment and feelings of confidence and satisfaction with choices about college and careers.²²

Added to studies of K-12-age students, recent initiatives focused on adult learners emphasize the importance of career development and career guidance. Community colleges and partner organizations are collaborating to develop career pathway programs that emphasize adult literacy and contextualized, accelerated developmental/remedial education to assist adults’ transition into postsecondary programs linked to family-wage sustaining careers.^{23, 24} Modular and bridge curriculum and comprehensive support services are important vehicles to support adult learner retention, program completion, and credentialing.²⁵ Comprehensive support services along with career exploration and development are critically important to assist adult learners to select and pursue future careers.²⁶ Adult bridge programs associated with Illinois’ CSSI and the Shifting Gears initiative, funded by the Joyce Foundation as well as DCEO, emphasize adult bridge policy and program development throughout the state. Adult learners in programs such as these stand to benefit by accessing enhanced career development services.

Throughout these and many other studies, the value of deliberate career development interventions is emphasized. As aptly expressed by Hughes and Karp (2004), there exists a “general agreement that career development is a desirable part of schooling, and there is evidence that many different types of career guidance interventions are effective.”²⁷ Effective career-related interventions range from interactions with a career practitioner (e.g., individual career counseling, a career course at a postsecondary institution), to experiential learning opportunities that are complementary to schooling (e.g., work-based learning, internships, shadowing), and to self-guided approaches (e.g., computer assisted career guidance programs).²⁸

The findings of these national studies provide a compelling rationale for enhancing career development in the state, and they echo the sentiment of members of the Illinois Career Development Task Force who have observed positive outcomes in their own students.

How Education Gaps Affect Illinois Citizens

Workplace changes, technology innovations, and global competition are changing the landscape of the U.S. workforce. By 2014, more than 63% of all new U.S. jobs will require at least some postsecondary experience such as occupational- or industry-based certification, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, or graduate degree.²⁹ This need for formal and advanced schooling is indicative of the transformation of the workforce changes into a knowledge-driven economy that requires advanced skills and an orientation toward life-long education.³⁰ Individuals working in the current and future labor force will be challenged to keep pace with changes in technology and global competition, as well as to respond to new demands on their abilities to problem solve in an increasingly complex world.

The transition from school or college to work is particularly challenging for individuals who the educational system has failed to serve. Like most states, an achievement gap exists in Illinois between students of color and other students, and between low and high income students.³¹ This gap is detrimental to students who are ill-served by the system as well as for the system and the state as a whole. Meeting the needs of all students is an extremely challenging goal, yet a goal that is of paramount importance to the state. Nationally, only one in three students who enters high school will receive a college degree. For students from low income backgrounds, the statistics are far more troubling, with only three in five graduating from high school and one in seven achieving a bachelor's degree.³²

The *Illinois State Report Card* from 2006 shows that Illinois' high school graduation rate just under 88% overall,³³ and the IBHE shows the college completion rate to be lower. The proportion of first-time, full-time freshmen who complete their degrees within 150% of the catalog time required was 59% at public four-year institutions, and 62% at private not-for-profit colleges and universities.³⁴ The Bridgespan Group study, reported earlier, shows having a clear awareness of the

link between college and career aspirations influences the likelihood of earning a college degree.³⁵ Career development practitioners assert that this awareness of aspirations and goals develops and evolves over a lifetime of experiences as individuals progress from one phase of their lives to another, often changing jobs and occupations during this progression. Therefore, recognizing that career development must be responsive to the changing needs of individuals coupled with the fluid demands of the labor force is extremely important.

Thinking about the state's P-20 educational system and economy as an integrated whole, Illinois is experiencing substantial challenges with establishing and maintaining a qualified workforce for primary industry areas such as healthcare, manufacturing, and transportation and logistics. The Illinois Governors' Workforce Development Conference in 2003 outlined a number of causes for critical skills shortages across the state. Among the key issues are (a) a lack of career awareness and clear career paths; (b) inadequate recruitment, particularly a failure to recruit nontraditional populations; (c) inadequate job matching; and (d) a lack of training capacity, accelerated training, or alternative training options for continued skill development.³⁶ Each of these issues has strong ties to the career development processes of exploration, decision-making, and execution. Indeed, an outgrowth of the state's CSSI was the recognition that action is necessary to enhance career development, precipitating the Illinois Career Development Task Force.

Career Development in Illinois: Past, Present, and Future

Despite career-related resources developed and offered by various state agencies, educators across the P-20 levels report frustrations with the adequacy of career services and the lack of a systematic approach to make those resources accessible. In the 2004-05 academic year, the average ratio of counselor-to-students in K-12 schools reported by states was approximately 1 to 472 nationally, according to professional school counseling associations. For the same year, Illinois reported a counselor-to-student ratio of 1 to 673, with only the states of Arizona, California, Michigan, Utah, and the District of Columbia reporting more extreme ratios.³⁷ It is therefore not surprising that students and parents report difficulties with acquiring meaningful career guidance and counseling within high schools, community colleges, and universities. Despite the recent period when the federal School-to-Work legislation placed concerted attention on career development during the mid-1990s to early 2000s, leading to enhancements within the state of Illinois supported by Education-to-Careers (ETC), members of the Task Force contend career development services are highly sporadic and elusive, particularly when schools are under-funded.

Further, while CTE is closely related to career development, the fact that high schools and community colleges offer CTE does not guarantee that career development is provided. Some CTE courses assume students make deliberate career choices before entering the curriculum; others presume students' career interests despite the lack of assessment of aspirations and goals. Thus, CTE curricula often assume students explore career options prior to focusing on education and training pertaining to a specific occupation at the high school or community college level, and this may or may not be the case. Depending on the career-related services and resources available, students often lack opportunities to pursue career options, and they have little chance to determine the occupational fields that motivate them to engage in school and prepare for careers. Career exploration and career development is

often even further diminished for adults, particularly adults who lack basic literacy and technical skills.³⁸

The Career Development Task Force also recognizes that, over time, numerous local programs and career-related activities have emerged across the state, such as the implementation of career days, career fairs, and career-focused clubs (e.g., teaching, business, engineering) in some school districts. Added to these activities, some high schools, colleges, and universities have developed career portfolio systems that are shared with students to help them think systematically about how their education and work-related experiences help demonstrate a coherent career path.

More recently, with passage of the new Carl D. Perkins legislation for CTE, the state has dedicated itself to developing CTE Programs of Study that are aligned with federal requirements, drawing on national career cluster information and lessons learned about implementation of career pathways within Illinois and from other states. Aligned closely with career development, CTE Programs of Study offer a backbone for reform of Illinois' educational pipeline, P-20 and beyond. By fully integrating with CTE Programs of Study, the state is positioned better than ever before to implement and sustain a comprehensive career development system that can meet the needs of all learners. The Task Force members agree that capitalizing on the window of opportunity created by CTE Programs of Study is critically important to P-20 education alignment throughout state.

Building on other developments since 1977, the state has sponsored a comprehensive career information system (CIS) for exploring educational options and career goals. CIS is designed for high school and college students as well as adults, and the new CIS Junior (formerly Countdown) used with middle and junior high school students. Career Click offers occupational skills, regional employment, and occupational outlook

information in an easy to use format. All three are organized by the U.S. Department of Education's 16 career clusters and available at no charge on the Internet to all Illinois citizens. The Illinois Career Resource Network (ICRN) within IDES provides these as part of the federal Perkins mandate (see: <http://www.ilworkinfo.com/icrn.htm>). Although several hundred thousand visitors are recorded each year on ICRN, showing some schools and colleges use the materials extensively, other schools use them sporadically. Whereas ICRN is the state system, it has not been encouraged or promoted consistently. As a result, some districts spend thousands of dollars per year leasing commercial systems that duplicate what is already tax-supported and free to them. Why has Illinois failed to reap the full rewards of such programming? What changes need to be made to insure that Illinois' career development efforts have greater impact?

The Illinois Career Development Task Force has pursued these kinds of questions and confirmed what previous CSSI Task Forces hypothesized, that past career development efforts have garnered only sporadic attention and limited support. Illinois has failed to implement an integrated or comprehensive foundation for career development throughout the state. This sporadic approach has led to vague or nonexistent awareness among local practitioners and uneven programs and services for students. A lack of consistency of services and approaches has led to great variety in the programs, strategies, and resources currently in place, making career development difficult to understand and access. With little in common from one locality to another, there is limited conversation between educational institutions and business/industry, contributing to the likelihood that the student outcomes (benefits) are undocumented and unevenly distributed.

While this Task Force report is committed to serve all learners it is important to make explicit the need for a strong commitment to serve minority, low income, non-traditional, and other underserved populations with career development services that reduce historical obstacles to their access to the

full development of their potential. Historically, students who lack a family history of college-going require greater assistance finding their way to further education. Many learners have no family or close friends who have attended college or entered a professional career. Therefore, the Task Force supports the implementation of career development services throughout the state in a fair and equitable manner. Attention should be paid to serving the needs of all populations including but not limited to persons living in poverty, migrant families, persons with disabling conditions, and others who present special needs when preparing for and entering the world of work. All students and the state will benefit from this inclusive approach.

THE NEED FOR LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATED DIRECTION

Stated bluntly, the state of Illinois lacks a clearly articulated policy on career development. Public statements from state education leaders, elected officials, and others associated with state agencies and the governor's office have been useful to identifying the problem, yet they have fallen short of providing the coordinated direction the state needs to secure adequate resources and obtain long-term commitments. This is unfortunate for the state – it is even more discouraging for the state's citizens.

Illinois has failed to implement an integrated or comprehensive foundation for career development throughout the state.

The magnitude of the population currently in need of education and training coupled with the growing demand for trained workers presents a challenge to state and local policy makers, educators, employers, industry representatives, and the students themselves. All types of institutions that seek to close the skills and achievement gaps need to recognize the part they play in supporting individual learners to make career choices. Educational institutions engaged in P-20 education, plus public and private partner agencies, need to meet the growing needs of the workforce, and they need to collaborate now to begin to meet this goal.

In the view of the Task Force, career development can and should be seen as a common denominator to connect education, industry, and government efforts into a unified approach for greater impact. After all, the bottom line for each of these primary stakeholders is the same – to positively influence the education, economic, and personal well being of youth and adults in Illinois and enhance the overall economy and social fabric that defines the well being of the state’s citizenry.

To this end, the Career Development Task Force believes the state of Illinois should enhance alignment between career development systems and education and training to prepare a more highly skilled and productive workforce. The time is now to move precipitously to implement a comprehensive career development system for Illinois.

Vision, Guiding Principles, and Recommendations

The work of the Career Development Task Force emerged in stages, first through the examination of previous research, policy and practical developments, then through the creation of a vision statement and guiding principles that represent the shared values, perspectives, and dispositions of members of the group, acting as representatives of colleagues and citizens of the state, at large. From these developments, the group identified a set of recommendations that represent the preferred direction for the state to pursue in the future.

THE VISION

Consistent with the Task Force's efforts to acknowledge the perspectives of both individual citizens and the statewide system of collaborators, the Task Force envisions that a comprehensive career development system will:

1. enable learners, throughout their lives, to clarify, commit to, and execute a career plan.
2. foster collaboration between educational and economic systems to create a high quality workforce.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In developing the aforementioned vision statement, members of the Task Force worked collaboratively to identify key terms, phrases, concepts, and practices that were thought to be indicative of a successful career development system. Of the many ideas shared by the group, the following points resonated with many members.

Illinois' career development system should:

- be inclusive of all people – “all learners”.
- be universal – crossing borders and creating common ground.
- have no age limit – offering comprehensive (life-long) services because career development continues throughout the lifespan.
- recognize the value of work, and acknowledge the role education, business, industry, and government play collectively to create a quality workforce and healthy economy.
- be purposeful, deliberate, systemic, and foundational – not an extra or add-on activity.
- emphasize alignment and integration between academic and career development services and activities, including aligning and integrating academic learning standards with occupational and career development standards.
- recognize that the process of career development is akin to problem solving or decision making in that these processes are crucial to success in all aspects of life. Individuals who experience the Illinois' career development system should experience transferable problem-solving skills for other aspects of life tasks.
- recognize its alignment with human development – theory and practice should be integrated to support positive human development needs and recognize the cyclical nature of career decision making.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Career Development Task Force recommends that a comprehensive career development system be implemented in three phases. Phase I emphasizes enhanced coordination of services, activities, and resources, many of which already exist but are disconnected, underutilized, or under-funded. Phase II builds on Phase I by adding new services, activities, and resources and integrating them more fully into the P-20 educational system. Phase III focuses on the future, envisioning a comprehensive career development system that is fully functional and considered one of the very best in the nation. Through this proposed three-phase process, the Task Force believes career development will have a positive impact on individual learners as well as education and the economy, bringing the state's career development system to a new level of universal access and effectiveness.

Phase I – Enhancing Coordination and Increasing Visibility

This phase focuses on enhancing the coordination and integration of existing career development services, activities, and career resources throughout the state and making those services more visible and accessible.

Recommendations associated with Phase I are:

- **Improve recognition and coordination of existing career development resources and services** at the state level, including resources offered by ISBE, ICCB, IBHE, ISAC, DCEO, and IDES. By better utilizing existing resources, the Task Force believes the state's career development system can be improved significantly. For example, there is a need to inform education and workforce training providers as well as the general public about the state's Career Information System (CIS). P-20 educators at the secondary and postsecondary levels need to know more about CIS to help their students understand future career opportunities. Introducing students to the notion of careers at

the elementary level, well before entering high school, can facilitate career choice at the secondary or postsecondary level. Adults returning to the formal education system or pursuing retraining or job advancement will also benefit from having greater access to career development resources and services.

- **Recognize and publicize the state's existing web-accessible career information** available free at www.ilworkinfo.com/icrn.htm. Also publicize Illinois WorkNet at www.illinoisworknet.com to make career development information as highly accessible as possible for all citizens in the state. Once state-level resources are showcased more fully, resources and services available at the local level should be inventoried to develop a comprehensive understanding of the kinds of services, activities, and resources that are available to education and training providers and students statewide. All teachers, counselors, librarians, administrators, and EFE directors need to be made aware of these resources so that they can use them with their students.
- **Integrate the national career development standards with the state's learning standards.** The national career development standards should also be aligned with occupational (industry) standards that guide the preparation of new and incumbent employees, including preparing new labor market entrants as well as those changing jobs or moving along career pathways. By aligning and integrating career standards with academic and occupational standards, the state will be better equipped to meet future workforce and economic needs. For example, Pennsylvania has incorporated career topics into their academic standards; see http://www.pde.state.pa.us/stateboard_ed/cwp/view.asp?a=3&Q=76716 and http://www.pde.state.pa.us/career_edu/lib/career_edu/CE&W2003.pdf for Academic Standards for Career Education and Work.
- **Support enhanced networking among state and local leaders** who show a strong commitment to career development, including linking professional organizations and associations that have a strong affinity for career development, including associations

dedicated to career development, career counseling, and CTE. Professionals engaged in teaching and counseling at all levels of the P-20 system should be able to benefit from these activities. So, too, can university teacher education programs that too often neglect career development as a critical element in preparing future teachers. Statewide annual meetings such as the Governor's Workforce Development Conference and the Connections Project conference (see www.connectionsproject.ilstu.edu) should be continued to promote networking and sharing of best practices in both education and workplace settings.

- **Increase state funding to ensure Phase 1 provides more opportunities to disseminate and use existing services, activities, and resources.** While the state's current efforts to enhance career development are admirable, it is disconcerting to learn that they fall short of reaching many constituents who need them. Funding is needed to support the abovementioned recommendations and ensure the equitable dissemination of resources and services throughout the state.

Phase II – Enhancing Implementation of Innovative Practices

This second phase builds on Phase I by encouraging the implementation of new and expanded career development programs, services, and resources, at all levels of the P-20 system. The primary focus of the Phase II recommendations involves integrating career development into curriculum and ensuring that career development is infused systematically into other P-20 initiatives that are emerging in the state.

Recommendations associated with Phase II are:

- **Capitalize on the state's current efforts to implement the federal Carl D. Perkins Programs of Study** that emphasize a systematic approach to CTE, career development, and workforce development for all learners. By aligning this proposed set of career development recommendations with emerging plans for the Perkins Programs of Study, the state gains efficiency and captures momentum needed to engage in deep and lasting change. The state's Perkins Programs of Study advisory committee is comprised of an outstanding group of professionals who are committed to enhancing education and career opportunities for students throughout the state. In addition, the state is funding pilot projects associated with healthcare that will inform and be informed by Perkins Programs of Study. Career development is an important element of these pilots, creating awareness among students about healthcare career opportunities and encouraging the integration of career development into the curriculum. By learning from these pilot projects and others that will follow in additional critical skills shortage areas, the state can gather useful information needed to integrate career development into the curriculum, develop materials, resources, and services, and implement training and development strategies for professionals engaged in P-20 education and employment.
- **Require Individual Career Plans (ICPs)** for all K-12 students and make them an option for all learners, including adults. Though ICPs have been encouraged throughout the state in the past, they have not been used on a consistent basis, and there has been little follow-up to ensure that whatever usage has occurred has been beneficial to students. To advance the use of ICPs beyond past practice, the Task Force encourages review of numerous models and adoption of ICPs that include structuring career planning activities and more fully documenting students' plans, goals, and aspirations. A resource that may be particularly useful to the state of Illinois is the Virginia Career VIEW website (see: <http://www.vaview.vt.edu/>) where career planning is related to career pathways and career clusters are searchable by school. Though this resource is focused at the K-12 level, the benefits of an ICP are easily extendable to adults.
- **Engage employers, educators, and workforce training providers in innovative pilot projects** that develop new and innovative approaches to integrating career development within and across the curriculum. Building on the earlier recommendation to marry career development with the

Perkins Programs of Study, including academic and occupational learning standards, encourage innovative programs and practices to emerge in the state by seeding local practitioners' work in ways that can be tested, replicated, and disseminated statewide. An outstanding example of how this activity can be implemented through partnerships between schools and employers is the integrated curriculum projects led by Mr. Greg Sutton's company, Tech Services Consulting Incorporated. By encouraging students as early as the middle school level to engage in integrated career development activities, the students are encouraged to master academic and career competencies. The use of the Internet and online learning tools supplement the learning to bring the teaching and learning process alive for students, engaging them in learning environments that closely replicate team-based work settings. Through these activities, the state can begin to capitalize on the true meaning of integrated academic and career curriculum and instruction.

- **Introduce the Career Readiness Certificate offered by ACT into the state's assessment strategy** (see: <http://www.act.org/certificate/index.html>). This strategy is appealing for numerous reasons. First, the Career Readiness Certificate could provide an employability certificate that demonstrates students' mastery of fundamental academic and career competencies. Second, the Career Readiness Certificate aligns well with the Perkins Programs of Study in that both initiatives seek to provide meaningful and tangible skills and knowledge that enable students to transition to college and careers, ready to be productive and successful in their endeavors. Third, employers would benefit from knowing whether students, youth or adults, have mastered fundamental skills and knowledge that are predictors of successful employment. Last, the state is currently launching the College and Career Readiness Initiative, backed by state legislation, that involves additional work with ACT on the alignment of curriculum, standards and assessment. By capitalizing on these various initiatives involving ACT at this point in time, the state has the opportunity to create a certification that can benefit students as well as employers.
- **Enhance teacher, administrator and counselor training** at all levels (K-12, college, adult) to enhance the baseline knowledge of education and training professionals throughout the state and actively engage them as key players in the comprehensive career development system. Utilize practitioners to create new opportunities to integrate career development into curriculum and instruction and assist instructional and counseling staff in the fields of education, training, and workforce development to understand the importance of integrating career development into the curriculum. Conferences and meetings – actual as well as virtual – should be used to reach school leaders, university teacher educators and teachers of all subject matter, adult educators, workforce training providers, and others to empower them to play a crucial role in implementation of the new system. Through this inclusive empowerment strategy, the state can create the buy-in needed to implement revolutionary change.
- **Require Portable Educational and Career Portfolios (including electronic portfolios)** for all learners as another means of ensuring that career planning and development become substantial components of the educational and career preparation experience. Portfolios are also extremely valuable resources for employers, colleges and universities, and other workforce training providers. The Illinois' Career Information System (CIS) provides a portfolio system online, at no charge. It offers customized reports and counselor portfolio administration to check student progress in career activities as well as scores in optional academic practice tests for ACT, PSAT, SAT, ASVAB, and others.
- **To accomplish Phase II, enhanced state funding is required.** Additional state funds are necessary to implement new services, activities, and resources associated with Phase II. The "next steps" section that closes this report provides further detail on recommendations for determining funding and support needed for Phase II.

Phase III – Building in Quality, Enhancing Opportunities

It is difficult to predict Phase III of this comprehensive system because new innovations are bound to emerge when the state better integrates and disseminates career development resources and services in Phase I and implements new innovative strategies in Phase II. Still, it is important to consider the possibilities of a truly comprehensive career development system and the opportunities it would bring to the citizens of the state.

Recommendations for Phase III include:

- **Pilot and implement “smart” career development systems to complement the web-based programs, resources, and services operating currently in the state.** Use new electronic learning technologies, online learning, and “smart” learning systems to engage learners of all ages in exploring career opportunities and engaging in real-world teaching and learning scenarios that help to expand their horizons. These systems should be widely accessible to ensure that all learners – regardless of age, income, and race/ethnic identity, and locale – have access to them.
- **Conduct systematic evaluation of the impact of career development on student, program, employer, and social outcomes.** Conduct systematic evaluation of programs, policies, and practices (including pilot programs) thought to offer promising services for all learners, but particularly groups of learners who have had limited access to career development services in the past. Document evidence of successful outcomes associated with the integration of academic and career-related curriculum and career guidance support. Using these results, add best practices to the Career Information System’s (CIS) Tools for Counselor section of the website, and disseminate information about innovative programs and practices widely throughout the state through professional organizations and other venues that reach a wide spectrum of education and training professionals as well as employers.
- **Continue to assess state and local governance and infrastructure** to insure that it supports the state’s evolving comprehensive career development system. To be sure, infrastructure means more than money, although increased funding is, without question, a necessity to making systematic improvements that include new resources, website, curricula, programs, and people. With respect to the latter, the Task Force recommends that the state continue to expand opportunities for education and training professionals at all levels to become active participants in career planning and development activities. By having trained professionals as their guides, more students will realize their career goals.

Conclusions and Next Steps

What is at stake? More importantly, what is the cost of doing nothing? If Illinois continues with a fragmented approach to career development where there is little commitment or consistency in practice, minimal coordination of existing resources, and minimal accountability for career outcomes, the state can expect students' performance to be the same – and possibly worsen over time. The 12% dropout rate for high school students, the failure of 40% of college students to complete their degrees, and the nearly universal complaint by employers that new employees lack necessary workplace skills will undoubtedly continue to erode Illinois' ability to compete in the global marketplace. It will also affect the standard of living closer to home because the lack of career direction correlates to less education and thus higher unemployment and increased criminal behavior. A recent Gates Foundation study showed that high school dropouts have poorer health and about a decade less of life expectancy, not to mention about \$1,000,000 less in lifetime earnings.³⁹

In direct contrast, America's Career Resource Network Association's (ACRNA) landmark study showed positive outcomes for integrated, comprehensive career development systems such as the one proposed in this report. *The Educational, Social, and Economic Value of Informed and Considered Career Decisions*⁴⁰ was updated in 2005, and it urges consideration of the extensive body of evidence on the educational, social, and economic value of career information and services that foster informed and considered career decisions (many of these studies are discussed previously in this report). The report offers an impressive array of studies that support the role of career development in educational outcomes such as improved educational achievement, improved preparation and increased participation in postsecondary education, and better articulation among levels of education and between education and work. On the social side there are benefits to family, peers, and community; higher levels of worker satisfaction and career retention;

a shorter path to primary labor markets for young workers; lower incidence of work-related stress and depression; and reduced likelihood of work-related violence. Economic consequences of comprehensive career development include higher incomes and increased tax revenues, lower rates and shorter periods of unemployment, lower costs of worker turnover, lower health care costs, lower incarceration and criminal justice costs, and increased worker productivity.

HIGH STAKES

State agencies, schools, colleges, professional associations, unions, employers, community groups, and other stakeholders across the state have an opportunity to expand the state's disparate collection of resources on career development. Now is the right time – the window of opportunity – to pull them together into a coherent systemic approach that can help students and adults make informed career choices to improve the quality of individual lives, communities, and the economic productivity of the state.

The solutions the Task Force recommends represent a sustained, systematic, and transparent approach to career development for all persons in Illinois. The approach honors the life-long nature of career decision making, as well as the natural, close relationship between education, careers, and the workplace. Task Force members believe that, for optimal impact, a career development system for Illinois should reach through and beyond traditional boundaries to include K-12 education, postsecondary institutions, community one-stop centers, industry and workforce training partners, and others in a unified effort. Implementation of such a comprehensive system cannot happen all at once but requires a phased approach that capitalizes on existing services and fills gaps to insure all learners receive the resources and support they need to be successful in their education and career pursuits.

NEXT STEPS

On December 12, 2007, Mr. Mark Williams and Dr. Debra Bragg presented this Task Force report to the Illinois Workforce Investment Board (IWIB). The presentation summarized major findings and recommendations and solicited comments and questions from the IWIB members most of which asked for clarification on the comprehensiveness of the plan and the nature of student populations who are expected to participate and benefit. In response, the presenters assured the IWIB members that the Illinois Career Development Task Force is committed to a truly comprehensive approach that encompasses a “cradle to grave” vision. The Task Force envisions alignment with the P-20 approach that is being adopted by the state of Illinois, including pre-Kindergarten through secondary and postsecondary education and inclusive of the adult and public and employer-sponsored workforce training and education system.

At the conclusion of the presentation, the IWIB members voted unanimously to adopt this Task Force report and charged the Illinois Career Development Task Force with taking the next steps to support implementation. The IWIB urged the immediate implementation of the Phase-I recommendations. To execute this work, the Task Force recommends members of the Task Force continue to meet and oversee Phase-I implementation. The Task Force was also charged with the group developing a detailed, operational scope of work and budget to implement Phase II. This work should be accomplished during the next 6-8 months, with periodic meetings schedule thereafter to oversee progress. This continued high level of activity is seen as critical to ensure that momentum is not lost and the current level of advocacy for change is sustained. With the continued commitment of the Task Force as well as the IWIB, there is greater likelihood that a comprehensive career development system will come to fruition in the state and, as a result, many more students will realize their education and career goals.

ENDNOTES

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