



Written Testimony for the Senate Higher Education Committee
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Charge 2#: Community Colleges

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Panel #7: Technical and Vocational Training programs and their impact on jobs

I. Technical and vocational training programs are a critical component of the Texas economy.

- a. *Closing the Gaps* has always included high-level certifications as part of the metrics for our Success goal, which is to award 210,000 higher education credentials annually by 2015.
- b. Very recently, we have gained access to reporting from for-profit institutions such as the University of Phoenix and ITT so we can better gauge how many graduates they produce each year in Texas, to include those from technical certification programs.
- c. Technical and vocational certification programs will play a critical role in making Texas competitive in the global economy.

II. Postsecondary education is still the driving force for our economy.

- a. This month, the *Center on Education and the Workforce* at Georgetown University released a report warning that millions of U.S. workers are at risk for being left behind.
- b. The premise of the report was that short and mid-term job forecasts imply there is a growing disconnect between the type of jobs employers need to fill and the number of Americans who have the education and training to fill those jobs.
- c. The report estimates that by 2018, 63% of all jobs in the U.S. will require postsecondary education.
- d. By that date, employers will need 22 million new workers with postsecondary degrees, yet we will fall 300,000 college graduates short each year between now and 2018.
- e. In Texas, the report finds that by 2018 only 56% of the jobs will require postsecondary education, about 7 points lower than the national average.
- f. This is troubling if we want Texas to remain competitive in the global economy.

- g. Anthony Carnevale, the Center's director, put it best when he said, "America needs more workers with college degrees, certificates, and industry certifications. If we don't address this need now, millions of jobs could go offshore."
- h. If Texas does not accelerate progress on increasing the numbers of higher education credentials, we may become one of the biggest losers of high quality jobs.

III. A strong educational foundation is critical to support lifelong learning.

- a. While technical and vocational credentials can quickly accelerate job prospects for students, we must ensure that all students have a strong academic foundation.
- b. We must resist the urge to water down or supplant academic curriculum in high school with technical or vocational training.
- c. Vocational and technical training can coexist in a curriculum, but any efforts to replace an academic foundation will place a student at a disadvantage in future years.
- d. The Department of Labor currently estimates that the average worker will change careers 3-5 times in a lifetime. This is *careers*, not jobs.
- e. The only way a worker will be able to adapt and overcome such changes, particularly in tough economic times, is if they have a set of academic skills they can call upon to change jobs or return to school for new training or even an advanced degree.
- f. Our dynamic economy and rapidly changing technology make it more critical than ever that students create and maintain a basic academic foundation that can help them adapt and evolve with the economy.