

Putting Learner Success First & Postsecondary Leaders

About Putting Learner Success First: A Shared Vision for the Future of CTE

Putting Learner Success First: A Shared Vision for the Future of CTE – released in May 2016 and supported by 11 national organizations – calls for a re-imagined education system where all learners have access to high-quality experiences that put them on a path to career success.

Putting Learner Success First boldly challenges the status quo and calls for a transformation of the education system while also defining CTE's role in igniting and achieving this goal.

The vision is anchored in five inter-related and equally important principles:

- **All Career Technical Education (CTE) programs are held to the highest standards of excellence.**
- **All learners are empowered to choose a meaningful education and career.**
- **All learning is personalized and flexible.**
- **All learning is facilitated by knowledgeable experts.**
- **All systems work together to put learner success first.**

Putting Learner Success First was developed through a collaborative process, bringing together leaders from K-12, postsecondary, workforce development and business and industry.

Why this Matters to Postsecondary Leaders

Postsecondary institutions are important partners in the CTE system, with many providing meaningful and rigorous CTE programs to learners of all ages, backgrounds and skill levels in communities across the country. From short-term certificate programs to advanced degrees, postsecondary institutions offers learners a diverse set of opportunities to prepare for the careers of their choice. With an increased focus on strengthening supports for learners and building completion agendas that result in meaningful career placements for graduates, high-quality CTE can and is playing a significant role in this work.

As the economy has changed, so must our education and training system. With the vast majority of good jobs requiring some education and training beyond high school and emerging technologies requiring upskilling throughout an individual's career, postsecondary institutions must be nimble, collaborative and career-focused. Postsecondary systems and institutions must also serve as a connector between K-12 and workforce development to ensure smooth and seamless transitions for learners of any age.

Despite postsecondary's critical role in supporting and providing CTE, not all postsecondary systems or leaders see themselves as part of the CTE system. *Putting Learner Success First* seeks to change that mindset by offering a robust set of principles and actions, which can only be accomplished with partnership from postsecondary leaders.

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How Postsecondary Leaders Can Help Advance Putting Learning Success First

Take stock of how current policies and practices and how well they align with the vision principles

The first step postsecondary leaders can take to support this vision is to identify where they fit and how they are currently meeting the principles and actions. Following that, postsecondary systems and institution leaders should be able to identify the next steps needed to drive important internal and external conversations about what they can do to advance their programs – both CTE and more traditional “academic” programs at two- and four-year institutions – to ensure all learners, whether enrolled in CTE or not, can be better prepared for career success.

Review, revise and reform program approval processes and requirements

While many of the principles and actions address the entire education system, the first principle – *All CTE programs are held to the highest standard of excellence* – is where all state leaders must start. This vision pushes postsecondary leaders and their partners to promote, fund and scale those programs that are truly and demonstrably high quality – while phasing out or transforming those programs that are not meeting learners’ or industry’s needs. In other words, set a high bar for quality and join K-12 in stepping up to the plate to ensure the processes they use to develop, maintain and fund programs lead to quality programs. Particularly at the postsecondary level, it means that regional or program accreditation requirements need to be re-evaluated to ensure they support this commitment to quality.

Partner with other state leaders – both inside and outside state agencies and workforce partners – to implement the vision

This vision was developed collaboratively by a wide array of stakeholders and, as such, also must be implemented by many individuals representing postsecondary, K-12, workforce development and business and industry. Postsecondary leaders should leverage, build and expand upon partnerships with other state leaders to explore the vision and identify opportunities for collaboration. The vision can be a conversation starter or a way to ground existing partnerships in the future of CTE and learner success. The implementation of the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act, Every Student Succeeds Act, Higher Education Act and Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act all provide a platform for such discussions.

In particular, the third principle – *All learning is personalized and flexible* – speaks to the importance of building models and programs that meet learners where they are and provide seamless pathways between secondary and postsecondary programs through dual/concurrent enrollment, articulation and transfer agreements, and aligned assessment and credentials. This can only be achieved by secondary and postsecondary leaders working hand in hand.

Get the message out

Postsecondary leaders are one of the most critical voices and should be at the forefront of sharing *Putting Learner Success First* with the CTE and workforce development communities, practitioners and partners. You can start by sharing the sign on campaign with your colleagues, partners and networks: <https://careertech.org/shared-vision-sign-on>

Share promising practices

Does your state have an effective policy for supporting credit for prior learning? Are there any institutions or campuses with particularly unique models of employer engagement or stackable credits or credentials? Are there lessons learned about using data to drive quality programs and outcomes? Share them in your state or with us at resources@careertech.org!