



## **RESPONSE BRIEF**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

The following is a “*Response Brief*” prepared by the Missouri Council of Career and Technical Administrators (“MCCTA”) in conjunction with the Missouri Association for Career and Technical Education (“MoACTE”). The purpose of this “*Response Brief*” is to attempt to clarify and persuade the reader to further research the impact of the “draft” proposal for reorganization within the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (“DESE”) on the delivery system of career and technical programs and services within the State of Missouri.

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## BACKGROUND REPORT

### *Connection of career and technical education to college and career readiness*

The Association for Career and Technical Education (“ACTE”) stated, in their position paper entitled, *“Expanding Opportunities: Post-secondary career and technical education and preparing tomorrow’s workforce”*:

*“Our nation is facing a deficit of skilled workers’ and the need to get additional people in and through post-secondary education and training has never been more necessary. Obtaining advanced skills – which include workplace skills, academic knowledge and continuous lifelong learning – has become vital to career success. Meanwhile, pressures from increased global competition and retiring baby boomers signal a growing shortage of skilled workers necessary to sustain our economy.*

*With nearly a third of all students in for-credit postsecondary education enrolled in career and technical education (CTE) programs, ...[CTE should] play the role of leader and convener, engaging partners across multiple sectors in the work to improve postsecondary education.”*  
(ACTE, 2007)

ACTE’s position paper (ACTE, 2007) made seven recommendations:

1. Establish postsecondary preparation and expectations for all.
2. Develop education systems that integrate all levels.
3. Develop curriculum and instructional offerings that link to careers, foster lifelong learning, and encourage competition.
4. Ensure portability and transferability of credits and skills attained.
5. Enhance student advising, academic and life-supports.
6. Increase financial support for low-income students.
7. Pilot innovative approaches to funding.

Even a basic review of the work of the DESE’s Division of Career Education would reveal that the leadership of the group has propelled career and technical education in Missouri toward these seven recommendations. There has been significant progress toward achievement in each recommendation while a balance has been struck in policies and procedures to accommodate local control for implementation.

The tradition of career and technical education being a ‘dumping ground’ for low-achieving and minority students is being strongly challenged in Missouri. The elimination of this practice continues to be a primary focus of programs and initiatives originating from leadership within the Division of Career Education and the organizations making up the Missouri ACTE.

Career and technical education in the State of Missouri is preparing rigorously to address the challenge of meeting the transitional needs of every individual student within Missouri's public school system to ensure college and career readiness skill sets in technical skill training, core academic preparation and social development. Commissioner Nicastro's goal of "world class skills in reading, writing, speaking and mathematics" stands as the mantra for career and technical education programs and services.

### ***Current national goals related to career and technical education***

The current State Director of Career and Technical Education has served on a task force of state directors (through the National Association of State Directors of Career and Technical Education – "NASDCTEc") developing a document that contains the vision of career and technical education delivery in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This group published five statements that reflect their 'new' vision for career and technical education in the pamphlet entitled, "*Reflect, Transform, Lead: A New Vision for Career and Technical Education.*"

1. Career and technical education is critical to ensuring that the United States leads in global competitiveness.
2. Career and technical education actively partners with employers to design and provide high-quality, dynamic programs.
3. Career and technical education prepares students to succeed in further education and careers.
4. Career and technical education is delivered through comprehensive programs of study aligned to the National Career Clusters framework.
5. Career and technical education is a results-driven system that demonstrates a positive return on investment.

The leadership of this group falls in line with the intentions of Congress through the reauthorization of the 2006 Perkins Act. In ACTE's book entitled, "Perkins Act of 2006: The Official Guide," they stated,

*"By completing the reauthorization of the 2006 Perkins Act, Congress showed its overwhelming support for career and technical education. Throughout the legislative process, Members of Congress emphasized the importance of high quality CTE programs that prepared students to be successful in further education and careers. Congress intended for the new Perkins Act to be a sign of its support, for the new Act to go further than ever before to improve CTE programs and provide for new innovation at the state and local level."* (ACTE, 2006)

### ***Current state goals related to career and technical education***

Under the leadership of the Division of Career Education, a statewide stakeholders group (including secondary and postsecondary education, as well as, business and

industry representatives) has been meeting for the past year to cast a vision for career and technical education. Beginning prior to current economic circumstances (and their full impact on education and funding) this group met, developed, reviewed and submitted its findings to MPR Associates, Inc. delivered a report entitled, “*Delivering Career Education in Missouri*,” which shared six goals and additional recommendations. Dr. Dennis Harden has cross-walked the NASDCTEc statements with the goals and recommendations from the statewide group. The crosswalk is included below for the reader’s review.

<b>NASDCTEc Vision for Career Education</b>	<b>Delivering Career Education in Missouri</b>
<b>CTE is critical to ensuring that the US leads in global competitiveness.</b>	<b>Goal 2:</b> Provide support for essential career education service programs to enhance the future economic development of Missouri.
<b>CTE actively partners with employers to design and provide high-quality dynamic programs.</b>	<b>Goal 3:</b> Real-world applications are provided to students through appropriate career-focused learning opportunities.
<b>CTE prepares students to succeed in further education and careers.</b>	<p><b>Goal 4:</b> Provide high-quality professional development activities that promote rigor, relevance, and relationships to increase student outcomes.</p> <p><b>Goal 5:</b> Develop a seamless transition for students between secondary and postsecondary institutions.</p> <p><b>Goal 6:</b> Every student will have a Personal Plan of Study.</p>
<b>CTE is delivered through comprehensive programs of study aligned to the National Career Clusters Framework.</b>	<p><b>Goal 1:</b> All curricula define relevant instructional competencies, academic knowledge, and technical skills, and are aligned to applicable state academic and industry-based standards and assessments.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 2:</b> Invest in Strategies to Spur POS System Development</p>
<b>CTE is a results-driven system that demonstrates a positive return on investment.</b>	<p><b>Recommendation 1:</b> Evaluate the Career Education Delivery System</p> <p><b>Recommendation 3:</b> Reevaluate Career Education Funding</p>

An analysis of the “draft” reorganization chart by representatives of the executive leadership of the Missouri Council of Career and Technical Administrators

("MCCTA") concluded that much of the impact (on what we have known as the Division of Career Education) with the "draft" reorganization chart relates to contact individuals and resource location to answer questions regarding programs and services. This brief will address the challenges in the next section, entitled, "**COMPELLING QUESTIONS.**" Before embarking on those questions, we would like to speak to the opportunities for growth we see within the "draft" reorganization chart.

1. Inclusion of the Division of Career Education staff within the "Finance" division could prove to be a strong move for DESE. In addition to ensuring appropriate funding for maintenance of effort and keeping assurances with the federal government for financial resources, career and technical education, we believe, will benefit from the contact that the career and technical education personnel will have with the other aspects of DESE financing.
2. Inclusion of the Division of Career Education personnel within the "Adult Learning and Vocational Rehabilitation Services" (or "Adult Learning and Rehabilitation Services") could provide some much needed connection for secondary, career education, post-secondary and adult services provided by our facilities. We see an opportunity for expansion of the focus provided by programs and services within this group by this move.
3. Although we will miss the incredible contribution of Michele Clark to career and technical education, we fully understand the inclusion of her within the "Communications" department. We believe this will make all aspects of DESE's services stronger.
4. Although inclusion of Division of Career Education personnel into the "Division of Data Systems" department may mean a more complicated process for getting answers for Core Data and MOSIS questions by career and technical education facilities, we believe that the process for data collection and decision-making at the secondary, career education and postsecondary level needs more unification. Only through greater unification of services, procedures and policies will the issues that exist in data systems be resolved.
5. Inclusion of Division of Career Education personnel in the "Division of Early Learning" is viewed positively. We believe that this provides an opportunity to expand services and draw more of the public school districts into these programs.
6. With a few reservations we also see the inclusion of the Division of Career Education personnel into the "Division of Quality Schools" as an opportunity for growth and expansion of effort. The integration of academics with career and technical education requires a unified effort with school reform. Our biggest question in this area revolves around Perkins Act programs, services and funding.

The 'crux' of our questions comes in the placement of the Division of Career Education personnel within the "Division of Standards and Assessments" department. We will start by conceding that this is conceptually a necessary

department; however, we would strongly recommend that the title of this department be “Division of College and Career Readiness”. We believe this honors the unique position requiring integration of academics with career and technical education, as well as, the need for this department to meet the needs of comprehensive high schools, area career centers and community colleges.

Standards and assessments falls short of the importance this offers to the “draft” reorganization chart. To move to ‘true’ preparation of individual students for career and college readiness, the secondary public education system will need to embrace its role as a ‘transition center’ for students, working in partnership with our postsecondary institutions, to ensure successful establishment of foundational academic and technical skill sets for our high school graduates. This division will be challenged to unify program delivery, implementation and assessment within the frame of our comprehensive high schools, career and technical education facilities and postsecondary institutions. We believe strongly that the name of this division will have a great deal of impact on the ability of this division to meet the charge related to their areas of responsibility.

As you can see there are several areas within the “draft” reorganization chart, which we fully support; however, there are several questions, which we believe are imperative to have answered prior to implementing this structure. It is to these questions which we turn our “*Response Brief*” at this time.

## **COMPELLING QUESTIONS**

***What mechanism is in place to insure coordination of programs and services for career and technical education within the “draft” reorganization chart?***

RESPONSE: Moving forward with development and delivery of career and technical education requires that comprehensive high schools, career and technical education facilities and postsecondary institutions work cooperatively to develop seamless transitions for students from middle school through completion of at least one year of postsecondary training/education. We cannot discount the availability of services within the DESE when it comes to building and maintaining these relationships.

We believe strongly that career and technical education facilities will need to know where they will turn to have their questions answered. In fact, the types and numbers of questions we respond to from comprehensive high schools and local school districts requires that we are prepared and receive timely assistance to help our secondary and postsecondary partners.

The “draft” reorganization chart does not provide enough detail as to where the coordination of programs and services will reside. We believe this needs to be addressed and provided at the time that the reorganization occurs and should

include career and technical education representatives in the development of a contact/response chart within the DESE.

**RATIONALE:** Career and technical education has a tradition, in the state of Missouri and within MoDESE, of being a responsive and functioning group that addresses the needs of career and technical education facilities throughout the state. The current leadership reestablished the rich tradition of cooperative relationships after a brief period of strained partnership with the DESE.

We credit the current leadership with providing communication and allowing for our input which enhanced the relationship between the Division of Career Education and local facilities. Again, we are not asking to keep the Division of Career Education, but we are strongly encouraging revisiting what made the current Division of Career Education successful to ensure a smooth transition to the 'new' reorganization.

Following marketing theory, there is a 'brand' to the Division of Career Education and we strongly request that this 'brand' be investigated and maintained where possible. We realize it will take time to analyze this, yet we feel it will help maintain the coordination of programs and services within the "draft" reorganization chart.

***Who will serve as the State of Missouri's 'point person'/State Director for career and technical education, as required by the federal government, within the "draft" reorganization chart?***

**RESPONSE:** We are aware of, and fully support, the need to establish a "State Director of Career Education" as required by the Perkins Act of 2006. Title and placement within the organizational chart are not as relevant as the presence of this person within the state. We strongly believe that the absence of this position will significantly hinder Missouri's ability to remain a leader in career and technical education. It will also disrupt the understanding that career and technical education has related to issues within other departments and divisions of the DESE.

**RATIONALE:** The previous filling of this role of state director has provided Missouri with a contact for the federal government, proved beneficial in sharing innovations and successes of Missouri's career and technical education programs with other states (leading program sharing of 'best practices') and has grounded career and technical education within goals and programs of the DESE.

Previous State Director's of Career Education have provided contact for professional organizations, led groups of stakeholders to review services and programs with an eye to improvement and provided the impetus for embracing change. This individual has been there to point out our successes and challenge us to change

when we resisted. We would even venture to say that this individual has maintained the link we need to student-centered programs and services.

The imperative is the role, not the person. Business and industry, comprehensive high schools, career and technical facilities, postsecondary institutions, parents, students, national, state and local government officials need this role to be evident within the frame of the organizational chart for the DESE. Without it the unified effort of academic and career and technical education is destined to wander without direction and representation at the national, state, and regional level.

Career and technical education in Missouri requires a voice at the table outside of the state. Our position as leaders in the provision of career and technical education services compels us to state that we do not believe this role can be overlooked within the reorganization of the DESE.

***What role will Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) have in the “draft” reorganization chart?***

RESPONSE: The absence of CTSOs from the reorganization chart is alarming! CTSOs provide interscholastic opportunity that the Missouri State High School Activities Association provides to extracurricular opportunities for Missouri’s students; however, CTSOs offer the added bonus of the activities being co-curricular. In addition, student involvement in the local high school experience is enhanced via involvement in CTSOs. Finally, students are clearly challenged to meet the expectations of college and career readiness through the activities of the local, state and national CTSOs.

It is for this very reason that the career and technical educators of the state of Missouri fought to remove the ‘optional’ language related to CTSOs from the MSIP Cycle V language. The importance of CTSOs to career and technical education is comparable to the relationship of a student’s success on the ACT with success in college. Over and over again we see, and hear, about the impact CTSOs had on the successful development of a student in preparation for a career and/or college entrance.

RATIONALE: CTSOs in Missouri consistently rank among the top 10 in the nation for participation, success and/or leadership. Consistently students from Missouri’s CTSOs move from local to state to national, and sometimes to world, competition levels. Yearly, business and industry leaders participate in local, state and national competitions and leadership events giving our students the opportunity to ‘rub elbows’ with employers and industry leaders. Annually, students are hired ‘on the spot’ due to their effort and involvement in CTSOs. CTSOs rank as the groups most likely to introduce them to local, state and national legislators and give them a real education on how the legislative process works.

No other organizations within Missouri's public school system reach students who are less likely to get involved and/or be recognized for their achievements. CTSOs offer a level playing field on which tomorrow's leaders engage today. In addition, the opportunity for advanced study is expanded for students who would not normally receive scholarships through the activities of the CTSOs. Whether it is a local scholarship, a competition scholarship, or a business and industry scholarship, each year many more students enroll in postsecondary education as a result of CTSOs. What greater example of college and career readiness could there be for career and technical education?

In addition, the Perkins Act of 2006 (ACTE, 2006) defines CTSOs as "an integral part of the instructional program" for career and technical education. It is with the impact on our students and the foresight of the federal government that we respectfully request that CTSOs clearly become part of the "draft" reorganization chart.

***Where will statewide coordination, and national representation, of Missouri's CTSOs fit within the reorganization chart?***

RESPONSE: Statewide coordination and national representation of Missouri's CTSOs would be impossible for career and technical education facilities under the current parameters. There is money available to take students to state interscholastic athletic championships, but participation in CTSOs national competitions are at the mercy of the student, local organization and facility to engage in effective fundraising. Annually, career and technical education facilities are required to fully fund raise for students to participate in these competitions. Advisors, or sponsors, are required to work additional hours without compensation because stipends are minimal for CTSO staff leaders and funds are not available to send advisors and students to competitions without sacrifice of another program, or service.

The programming and services provided by the state for CTSOs has insured that our students are capable of participating. If this were to cease, the presence of CTSOs within career and technical education facilities would be in jeopardy. It is imperative that this oversight be corrected in order to provide this valuable service to students, business and industry, parents and our communities.

RATIONALE: The impact of CTSOs on career and technical education was stated in the previous question, thus it will not be repeated here. In addition to the rationale already presented, we would like to add the following. Having state leadership for CTSOs provides mediation and temperance to some stressful situations. In a world of volunteers, the CTSOs of Missouri consistently provide fair and impartial competitions because of the involvement of the DESE personnel who tirelessly

ensure the integrity of our events. We are very aware of the positive image that Missouri's CTSOs and competitions have in the national organizations. We believe that this is due, in large part, to the personnel from the DESE who actively work to increase the success of these organizations within Missouri.

***Will these questions be thoroughly be researched, analyzed and answers organized for implementation prior to the implementation of the reorganization chart?***

RESPONSE: We are appreciative of the Commissioner of Education's willingness to hear and receive feedback on the "draft" reorganization chart for the DESE. We recognize that there are many more aspects of the DESE than career and technical education. We respect the plan for reorganization; however, we believe that the impact on career and technical education, as related to these questions, needs to be researched, analyzed, and responses communicated prior to the implementation of the "draft" reorganization chart for the DESE.

RATIONALE: We want to move with the Commissioner of Education into the future of educational delivery in the State of Missouri. We do not stand in opposition to the "draft" reorganization chart. The questions we have presented previously are our main concerns as this reorganization chart begins to take shape for implementation. We recognize that matters like meeting the requirements of the Perkins Act of 2006, maintaining Enhancement Grant proposal and funding practices and maintaining the level of commitment to CTSOs within Missouri will continue to need responses from the DESE for us to meet the requirements placed upon these programs. Finally, we believe that a cooperative, voluntary task force of individuals can provide important review and planning for transitional services if convened as quickly as possible.

The phrase, "Together Education Achieves More," may not be the typical way the slogan is stated, but the concept has merit in the current situation. The possibility of reorganization, budgetary impediments and the pressing issues facing our legislators requires that we approach the "draft" reorganization chart for the DESE with enthusiasm while maintaining an ear to what we have learned in the past.

## **REQUEST**

***Commissioner of Education establishment of a voluntary work group to study these questions and provide recommendations prior to full-implementation of the reorganization chart for DESE.***

Given these questions, our responses and our rationale, we request the Commissioner of Education to establish a voluntary work group of personnel from DESE and career and technical education programs in the state to study these

questions and provide recommendation for a smooth transition from the current organization of the DESE to the “draft” reorganization chart as available for review.

We respectfully await your response to our “*Response Brief*”.

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Ms. Laura Hendley, MoACTE President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David A. Ruhman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

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David A. Ruhman, MCCTA President

*Perkins Act of 2006: The Official Guide.* ACTE. Alexandria, VA. 2006.

*Expanding Opportunities: Postsecondary Career and Technical Education and Preparing Tomorrow's Workforce.* A Position Paper. ACTE. Alexandria, VA. March 2007.

Klein, S. *Delivering Career Education in Missouri.* MPR Associates, Inc. Portland, OR. July 2009.