



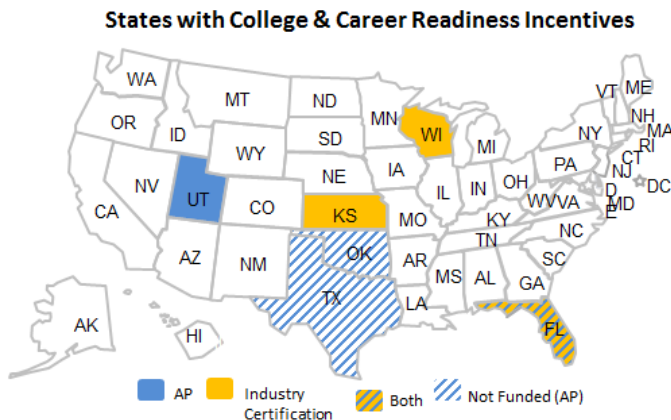
COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS: BUILDING A GLOBAL WORKFORCE

A comprehensive college and career readiness initiative prepares students for the rigors of college and the global workforce. While there are many moving parts, each initiative is designed to increase student acquisition of college credit and meaningful employer certifications that give students a leg up in the college classroom and the labor market and allow these students to become future contributors to the U.S. economy.

Why do we need our students to be college and career ready?

Today’s high school graduates often lack the skills that employers need and the critical thinking skills that colleges expect. According to the 2014 ManpowerGroup Talent Shortage survey, 40 percent of U.S. employers report difficulty in filling jobs and almost half indicate that a lack of hard skills is the biggest reason why. Meanwhile, Complete College America reports more than 50 percent of students entering two-year colleges are placed in remediation, almost 40 percent of them never complete remediation, and fewer than 10 percent will earn a degree in three years or fewer. In other words, good-paying jobs are left unfilled, and students aren’t ready for the demands of college.

Meanwhile, the price index for college tuition grew 79.5 percent between August of 2003 and 2013 according to U.S. News and World Report. This creates a substantial risk of pricing large numbers of our students out of the college market. Students and their parents are looking for ways to save money on college costs as the students prepare for college and career.



“To compete with the rest of the world in the 21st century, we must produce competitive high school graduates ready for college or meaningful careers.”

Governor Jeb Bush

What are college and career readiness initiatives?

College and career readiness initiatives provide the means by which students are prepared for college and career success. Successful initiatives reach all students and share the following common elements:

1. Providing incentives tied to student performance in courses and programs that allow students to earn college credit and meaningful industry certifications;
2. Providing greater opportunities for students to access more rigorous college and career courses, programs, certifications, or degrees;
3. Distributing information to parents and students about the available options for college and career readiness and, just as importantly, consist of policies to allow the information to become available to parents, students, schools, and teachers; and
4. Holding high schools responsible for the college and career readiness of their students.

College and Career Readiness Incentives

Incentives encourage schools to prepare students by offering opportunities to earn industry-verified job certifications during high school in high-wage and high-demand fields and greater access to rigorous college-level content, such as Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB). **These opportunities better prepare students for the demands of college and the needs of the workforce.**

Industry certifications help fill the gap between the technical skills that employers want and what current high school graduates possess.

What evidence is there of the success of industry certification incentives?

States like Kansas and Wisconsin have recently enacted industry certification incentives, while Florida's program is the largest and longest running program. In 2007-2008, the first year of the industry certification incentive, 803 industry certifications were earned. Just six years later in 2012-13, 45,277 students earned 50,576 industry certifications in career academies, with an additional 11,154 industry certifications earned outside of career academies. Moreover, 28.7 percent (249,726) of high school students in Florida are enrolled in career and professional academies and career themed courses that offer industry certification courses, compared to 2.2 percent in 2007-2008. These certificate earners are more likely to graduate from high school, have higher GPAs, and take an accelerated course like AP, IB, or dual enrollment.

Advanced Placement incentives helps provide access to courses that better prepare students for college when they otherwise might not have had an opportunity.

What evidence is there of the success of Advanced Placement incentives?

Since the implementation of the College Board partnership and incentives for AP courses, Florida has enjoyed a 391 percent increase in total AP exam takers and a 322 percent increase in qualifying scores from 1999-2013.

Black and Hispanic students had similarly impressive gains from 1999-2013. Florida's Hispanic students saw a 606 percent increase in participation and a 514 percent in qualifying scores. Florida is one of the only states to have eliminated the AP equity gap. Black students saw similarly impressive gains with a 740 percent increase in participation and a 519 percent increase in qualifying scores.

IN THE LONG RUN, EVERYONE BENEFITS FROM COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS INCENTIVES

Benefits of Industry Certification incentives:

- Students benefit through earning a meaningful work credential that enables the student to begin a good-paying, in-demand job right out of high school.
- Parents and students benefit through increased opportunities to earn college credit in high school, save money on college expenses, and be more prepared for college coursework,
- Teachers and schools benefit from bonus funding for each student who earns an industry certification.
- Employers benefit through verification that a student can do the job for which employers are having trouble filling.
- The state benefits through the potential for realizing economic growth through a skilled workforce, which can attract, expand, and sustain high-value industries in the state.

Benefits of AP incentives:

- Parents and students benefit through increased opportunities to earn college credit in high school, save money on college expenses, and be more prepared for college coursework.
- Low-income, rural and minority students benefit through identification of AP capable students who may not otherwise know they are capable and the resources for those students needing a little extra help to prepare them for AP coursework.
- Teachers and schools benefit from bonus funding for each successful AP student, especially those students in low-performing schools.
- The state benefits by reducing postsecondary expenses by having students graduate more on time and reducing potential remediation costs, and by gaining more college-ready students.

Access, Information, and Responsibility

Though incentives are a major component to college and career readiness initiatives, access, information, and responsibility all play an equally important role in helping prepare students for college and the work force.

Access to rigorous courses like AP and dual enrollment is essential to college readiness. Whether through college credit in core curriculum courses like math, English, or science, through collegiate high school, or through early high school graduation scholarship, without proper access, students cannot better prepare themselves for what is ahead.

Information to students and parents is vital to ensuring they know what is available. Underserved students particularly benefit from partnerships, like the College Board partnership, because they are targeted and offered preparation for life beyond high school that was previously not available to them. Parents and students also need information on colleges so they can make more informed decisions. A McKinsey & Company survey of recent four-year college graduates revealed these students did not look at employment data or starting salaries. It also revealed that of those students, the majority would choose a different field of study. An Economic Security Report, States offers a realistic picture of postsecondary institution success by degree or postsecondary certificate in terms of prospective future earnings and employment opportunities, would give students the information they need to make a more informed decision.

Along with these two principles is also responsibility. The only way for college and career readiness initiatives to be provided through access and with information, is for high schools to be held responsible for offering programs and putting value into them. States should ensure that employers and colleges trust the value of a high school diploma. This is accomplished through requiring three components: (1) college and career readiness standards, (2) college and career readiness graduation requirements, and (3) demonstration of student college and career readiness by assessments. With value in the high school diploma, students can be fully ready to begin a job or enter college upon graduation.

All initiatives working together can better prepare high school students for life after graduation.