

The University Council for Workforce and Human Resource Education: Its History, Purpose, and Activities

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The University Council for Workforce and Human Resource Education is a nonprofit organization representing leading United States universities that offer graduate programs in career and technical education (CTE) and human resource development (HRD). The mission of the Council is to be a recognized force in shaping the future of CTE and HRD through improving the policy and practices of education in the United States toward the betterment of individuals and the larger society.

The Council serves the CTE and HRD academic communities through multiple purposes. First, the Council provides a forum for surfacing and debating contemporary issues of significance to researchers and practitioners in the related fields of CTE and HRD. As part of this forum, the Council works to examine and formulate positions on emerging workforce trends and issues affecting students, schools, institutes, universities, communities, and government agencies. Second, the Council works to improve the capacity of its member institutions to shape the direction of CTE and HRD through teaching, research, and service. A major part of this mission is to increase the visibility of the higher education institutions that provide professional preparation of individuals preparing for roles in CTE and HRD. Third, the Council tries to enhance collaboration with individuals and organizations that focus on issues affecting CTE and HRD. In carrying out these purposes of the organization, special attention is given to maintenance, development, and operation of the Council.

The Beginning

In 1967 the United States Congress passed the Education Professions Development Act of 1967 (EPDA) as Public Law 90-35 (Gordon, 2003). Among its multiple features, this act allocated funds to universities to provide fellowships to increase the number of vocational teacher educators. Several universities nationwide received funding and began programs in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Periodic meetings of the EPDA Project Directors became commonplace for reporting on the progress of their students and discussing ongoing projects.

During the July 9-10, 1975, Project Directors' meeting, Dr. William F. Pierce, Deputy Commissioner for the Bureau of Occupational and Adult Education in the U.S. Office of Education, addressed the group and expressed a strong desire for greater involvement and leadership in vocational education by institutions of higher education. His speech ultimately turned out to be the primary catalyst for a discussion to create a unifying professional body that

could represent universities with doctoral programs in vocational education (G. I. Swanson, personal communication, July 30, 1975).

On August 4-5, 1975, Dr. Gordon Swanson from the University of Minnesota organized and conducted a committee meeting of EPDA Project Directors to “deliberate the charge which Bill Pierce gave us on July 9.” At a meeting of the EPDA Project Directors, held in Washington DC in September of 1975, Dr. Lloyd Phipps from the University of Illinois presented a committee report in response to Dr. Pierce’s remarks. Part of these remarks included a conclusion that, “there is a very loosely organized framework for higher education’s involvement in vocational education.” Further, “vocational education’s emphasis in higher education receives little consideration in accreditation processes ... (and) ... vocational education in higher education operates on a narrow base.” One of the committee’s recommendations was to “Establish some kind of collective spokespersonship for higher education institutions involved in vocational education.” A proposed name for such a body was the “Council on Vocational Education Development.” The Project Directors asked Dr. Phipps and his committee to become a “steering committee” and develop a report for the next meeting that would provide a more formalized set of considerations for establishing a voluntary vocational education council (EPDA Project Directors, Meeting Minutes, September 24, 1975).

In February 1976, the EPDA Steering Committee for the creation of the “University Council on Vocational Education Development” met at the Center for Vocational and Technical Education at the Ohio State University with the intent of creating the mission, purposes, and structure of the Council. Those in attendance included Ralph Bergman, Assistant Director of the EPDA Program; A. J. Miller, Ohio State University; George O’Kelly, University of Georgia; John Skink and Gordon Swanson, University of Minnesota; Lloyd Phipps, University of Illinois; and Richard Whinfield, University of Connecticut. Dr. Phipps was chosen as Chair Pro Tem of the Committee. Six additional EPDA Institutions were to be invited to become Charter Members of the Council (Meeting Minutes, February 17, 1976).

In April 1976, the second meeting of the Steering Committee was held in Washington DC, with representatives from all EPDA institutions attending. The purpose of the meeting was to update the EPDA institutions on the progress for establishing the Council and to encourage membership. Plans were made for a meeting in Denver to incorporate the council, adopt by-laws, elect the Board of Trustees and officers, plan the first publication, publicize the Council, and plan next steps (Meeting Minutes, April 23, 1976).

During the meeting of the EPDA Project Directors in Denver, Colorado, held in July 1976, the “University Council for Vocational Education” (UCVE) was officially established. In attendance were: Dr. B. Harold “Tex” Anderson, Colorado State University, Dr. Lloyd Briggs, Oklahoma State University, Dr. Carl Dolce, North Carolina State University, Drs. Wayne Courtney and Joel Galloway, Oregon State University, Dr. Aaron J. Miller, Ohio State University, Dr. Jerome Moss, University of Minnesota, Dr. George O’Kelley, University of Georgia, Dr. Lloyd Phipps, University of Illinois, Dr. Mel Barlow, UCLA, Dr. Carl Shaffer, Rutgers University and Dr. Richard Whinfield, University of Connecticut. Guests present were Ralph Bergman, National Advisory Council on Vocational Education, and Dr. Robert Taylor from the Ohio State University. Dr. Phipps was elected President of the Council, Dr. Whinfield

elected as Secretary-Treasurer, and Drs. O'Kelley, Moss, Shaffer, and Courtney were elected as Trustees. Dr. Moss was also elected Vice President. The first Annual Representative Assembly was planned for July 1977 (Meeting Minutes, July 22-23, 1976).

The first official meeting of the University Council was held at the National Bicentennial Conference in October 1976 in Minneapolis, Minnesota (Meeting Minutes, UCVE, October 10-11, 1976). The Charter Institutional Members of the Council were: Colorado State University, North Carolina State University at Raleigh, Oregon State University, Oklahoma State University, Rutgers University, The Ohio State University, University of California at Los Angeles, University of Connecticut, University of Georgia, University of Illinois, and University of Minnesota.

The *Bylaws for the University Council for Vocational Education* (UCVE) were adopted at the inaugural meeting in 1976 (Meeting Minutes, July 22-23, 1976). "Section D" of these Bylaws expressed the original purposes of the UCVE:

1. Provide a university based forum for appraising the role and function of vocational education;
2. Provide a spokesman for universities regarding points of view and common sense propositions on a variety of issues confronting vocational education, including teacher education and research for vocational education;
3. Explore diverse areas in vocational education and areas related thereto, to develop new knowledge and to ascertain its effective use; and
4. Provide a mechanism for improving the capacity of higher education institutions for professional personnel development in vocational education. (p. 1)

Evolution of the Council

The University Council's institutional membership originally was composed of the leading doctoral granting vocational teacher education programs in the country. In the 1980s and 1990s, vocational education in the public schools, and vocational teacher education programs in particular, experienced a dramatic decline. Much of this decline was attributed to a national emphasis to increase the academic requirements for high school graduation, which resulted in decreasing enrollments in elective courses such as vocational education. As a result, vocational, technical, and occupational programs transitioned to post-secondary trade schools and community colleges. These changes forced higher education institutions with vocational teacher education programs to significantly change their focus. At the same time, a growth in HRD programs was occurring within the EPDA institutions and in higher education in general. Some of the institutions that historically had very strong vocational teacher education programs shifted their primary focus toward HRD programs. In some cases, departments of vocational education were combined with other departments as part of a restructuring movement in colleges of education nationwide. In other cases, departments of vocational education were allowed to decline by not replacing faculty who retired or left an institution. As a result, many of the University Council's members could no longer meet the original criteria for membership.

Realizing that vocational education and HRD have many aspects in common, the Council's Membership Committee engaged in a study to examine the appropriateness of expanding membership criteria (Meeting Minutes, July 24-26, 1996). As a result of institutional surveys and much discussion, the Council voted to accept academic programs that included both vocational teacher education and HRD as qualifications for membership. The Council decided to adopt the term "workforce education" in place of "vocational education" to reflect the evolving broader perspective of programs that prepare our nation's workforce, whether they were at the secondary or post-secondary education level. In 1998, the Council voted to change its name from the University Council for Vocational Education to the University Council for Workforce and Human Resource Education (UCWHRE; Meeting Minutes, July 16-18, 1998).

The evolution to the current focus of the University Council also brought about a refocusing and expansion of its mission and purposes. In 2001 the Council adopted the current mission statement that states, "The mission of the UCWHRE is to be a recognized force in shaping the future of the career and technical education and human resource development through improving the policy and practices of education in the United States toward the betterment of individuals and the larger society" (UCWHRE, 2001a, p. 1). The original purposes of the Council were reworded to be inclusive of both CTE and HRD. The purposes were revised but maintained in the spirit of their original intent to provide a forum for discussion, develop positions on issues, and improve the capacity of member institutions in teaching, research, and service. Additionally the Council added purposes dedicated to promoting the understanding of current issues, increasing the visibility of member institutions, and expanding collaboration with individuals and institutions with common purposes.

The University Council continues to evolve, as employment needs change in workforce education and HRD. There has been a recent surge of interest in CTE at the high school level, which places increasing demands on the University Council institutions to revive their teacher education programs in CTE. There has also been an increasing demand for scholars and practitioners to fill education and training roles in corporations, non-profit community agencies, and health professions. These changing market demands provide new opportunities for growth of undergraduate and graduate programs in CTE and HRD.

Current Status and Programs

Governance of the Council

Governance of the University Council is vested in a Representative Assembly consisting of one delegate from each member institution. A delegate must be a full-time faculty member engaged in the work of CTE and HRD from the member institution. The Representative Assembly approves the policies and guidelines of the Council, including the annual program of activities. The Representative Assembly meets twice annually.

The Board of Trustees is authorized to handle the business of the Council. The Trustees follow the business of the Council and ensure that the guidelines and criteria included in the by-laws and other guidelines developed at the Representative Assembly meeting of the Council are followed. The Board of Trustees consists of the officers plus three elected Trustees. The current

slate of officers includes a President, Vice President, and Secretary-Treasurer. The Representative Assembly elects the officers and the Trustees.

The governing structure of the Council includes an Executive Committee consisting of the President, Vice President, and Secretary-Treasurer. The Executive Committee conducts business as authorized by the Board of Trustees. The Council is supported through annual dues assessment (currently \$325) and through voluntary contributions, grants, contracts, and sales of publications.

Membership Criteria for the Council

The initial Membership Criteria for the Council specified that institutions must have a doctoral program with a “major in vocational education or be available in each of the five specialized vocational fields” (UCVE, 1976, p. 2). Each member institution needed to employ at least ten “full-time staff members with teaching rank” in related disciplines to “guarantee breadth of the doctoral program” (p. 2). Faculty also needed to have a record of “contributions through disciplined inquiry, which are recognized as worthwhile as judged by the Council” (p. 2). Finally, the location of the program had to be “assembled on a single well-established university campus” (p. 3).

Current membership requirements follow the original criteria although the disciplinary focus of the member institutions now emphasizes leadership, research, service, and instruction in CTE, training, and development. Membership is limited to those universities that have a doctoral program with an emphasis on both CTE and HRD. Each member institution must also have a sufficient number of graduate faculty with expertise in those areas to adequately support these programs (UCWHRE, 2001b).

Major Activities

The University Council has engaged in several major activities since its inception. These activities have included: (a) serving an advocacy role and providing advice on national issues and legislation affecting the field; (b) sponsoring the publication of research and policy papers, monographs, and books; (c) providing professional development for its membership; and (d) sponsoring an awards and recognition program.

Advocacy role. Since 1976 the membership of the University Council has written position papers, letters of support, and policy proposals to national education leaders and congressional representatives and senators regarding the development of legislation that affects secondary and post-secondary CTE and workforce development. Leaders of the Council have testified before Congress and participated in research studies sponsored by federal education agencies to help shape federal legislation.

Scholarship. An important University Council activity is the generation of scholarly knowledge. Beginning with *The Role of Universities in Vocational Education* (1977), authored by Carl Schaefer and Jerry Moss Jr., a series of research-based publications have been sponsored by the University Council. Some milestone publications include *Beyond the Debate*:

Perspectives on Preparation of Vocational Education Teachers (1988) edited by John S. Washburn; *A Context for Change: Vocational-Technical Education and the Future* (1990), edited by Nevin R. Frantz Jr. and Melvin D. Miller; *Beyond Tradition: Preparing the Teachers of Tomorrow's Workforce* (1996) edited by Nancy K. Hartley and Tim. L. Wentling; *Beyond Tradition: Preparing HRD Educators for Tomorrow's Workforce* (1998), edited by Bob R. Stewart and Helen C. Hall; and most recently, *Leadership in Career and Technical Education: Beginning the 21st Century* (2005) edited by James A. Gregson and Jeff M. Allen. The overarching purpose of these and other publications is to present research and spark a forum for continuous development of the profession.

Professional development. A traditional activity for the University Council has been a day of professional development during the annual summer meeting. Depending on the issues of the day, the Council has arranged sessions presented by recognized leaders, scholars, and experts to inform institutional representatives of the most recent research, policies, and/or practices regarding the profession. These professional development activities have also included expanded dialogue between Council members in efforts to learn from each other.

Another form of professional development for CTE and HRD program leaders is the Biennium Benchmark Survey that has been completed every other year since 1995. This survey provides cross institution comparison of critical benchmarking data such as the number of faculty by rank and institution; the number of faculty anticipating retirement in 2 or 4 years; faculty salaries by rank; percent time spent on teaching, research, and service; average teaching loads (per term) for faculty; graduate student compensation; enrollments and trends; degrees offered; admissions requirements for doctoral students; and program requirements. Such data have been invaluable to program leaders who are tasked with the difficult responsibility of maintaining the quality of their programs in an increasingly competitive market.

Awards and recognition. The University Council's awards program has provided a means for national recognition of accomplishments by member institution faculty and other professionals from the field. The award program includes awards for the Outstanding Dissertation, Outstanding Young Scholar/Assistant Professor, and Meritorious Service. The individuals selected for these awards receive a plaque from the Council and a check for \$1000. The Council also offers a Doctoral Research Dissemination Grant to address the goal of promoting and supporting research presentations of the member institutions' doctoral students at professional conferences. Upon acceptance of the research proposal, the institutional representative nominates the doctoral student for the grant. Up to five doctoral students can be selected to receive \$300.00 to support their conference travel expenses.

Final Comments

The universities represented by UCWHRE are considered world leaders in the area of workforce development and human resource education. While they are natural competitors for students and external funding, they have traditionally worked closely together for over 30 years to collectively develop the next generation of leaders that are prepared to solve problems related to achieving a professional, productive, and competent workforce. The University Council continues to face a changing environment in higher education that places program leaders in a tenuous and difficult position. State institutions of higher education are receiving less state

support for their recurring budgets; there is increasing pressure on faculty to seek external funding to support their research agendas, and the quality standards for promotion and tenure continue to rise. The program leaders that serve as the institutional representatives of the University Council have been faced with changes in accreditation standards, accountability demands, downsizing, restructuring, and technological changes. Coupled with a recurring tension between struggling undergraduate programs in CTE teacher preparation and growing graduate programs in HRD, these program leaders are often faced with difficult challenges that have no easy and clear solution. Throughout its history, the University Council has served as a major vehicle for the program leaders of its institutional members to learn from each other and work together to maintain high standards related to doctoral, master's degree, and undergraduate programs that provide academic preparation for teachers, practitioners, and researchers in areas related to workforce development, CTE, and HRD.

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