

Expanding Successful Career and Technical Education Through Career Academies

“An economy built to last demands that we keep doing everything we can to help students learn the skills that businesses are looking for.”

—President Barack Obama, February 13, 2012

As the Administration’s blueprint for a reauthorized *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006* ushers in a new era of rigorous, relevant, and results-driven career and technical education (CTE), we must both identify effective programs and support the expansion of programs that have a record of success. **To increase opportunities for students to gain exposure to rigorous college preparatory and work-based career and technical curricula, President Obama is proposing a new \$1 billion competitive fund over three years to increase the number of high-quality career academies.**

To create an American economy built to last, we need to ensure that all students graduate from high school college- and career-ready. Career academies combine college-preparatory and career and technical curricula, united by a career theme, such as health care, business and finance, or engineering. The strength of career academies is their ability to make education more relevant to students through personalized and contextual learning, while preparing students for continuing education at the postsecondary level and for successful careers. Local employers play a critical role in career academy programs, providing both career mentoring and work-based learning opportunities for students. In turn, career academies provide employers with the skilled workforce they need to be competitive.

Rigorous evaluations of career academies across the country have demonstrated that offering students academically rigorous curricula embedded in career-related programs can reduce high school drop-out rates and prepare students for high-earning and high-skilled careers. Data have shown that high school students who graduate from career academies make on average 11 percent more per year than their non-career academy counterparts. Young men, a group that has faced a serious decline in earnings in recent years, make 17 percent more annually than young men who did not graduate from career academies. Higher earnings help our overall economy, increasing consumer spending and strengthening the middle class.

Through this new investment, states would award competitive grants to high-need school districts to **dramatically expand the number of career academies by 3,000 nationwide and provide services to an additional half a million students— a 50-percent increase.**

The enactment and implementation of the Administration’s career academies proposal would:

- **Improve student achievement and reduce drop-out rates.** The Administration’s proposal would support career academies that offer a rigorous curriculum that is relevant to students’ interests, and provide work-based learning opportunities and mentoring that keep students engaged in school.
- **Increase postsecondary attainment.** The Administration’s proposal would support career academies that align high school and on-the-job and postsecondary training opportunities. Through dual-enrollment and dual-credit agreements, students can obtain industry and postsecondary credentials and be on a pathway to career success sooner and with less student loan debt.
- **Help industries hire American workers.** Presently, many industries look overseas to find workers with the skills required in growing fields like information technology and advanced manufacturing. The Administration’s proposal would provide incentives for industry partnerships and align academic curricula with local and regional industry needs.