

## EXPANDING CAREER ACADEMIES

“Join me in a national commitment to train 2 million Americans with skills that will lead directly to a job.”

- President Obama

The President’s budget maintains a strong commitment to education and job training initiatives, including **\$1 billion to expand the number of career academies and increase opportunities for students to participate in college-preparatory and career and technical curricula in their schools.** In order for the United States to out-innovate and out-compete the rest of the world, we will need to ensure that all students graduate from high school college- and career-ready. Career academies across the country have shown that offering students academically rigorous curricula embedded in career-related programs reduces high school drop-out rates and prepares students for careers that lead to high earnings.

Career academies combine a college-preparatory and career and technical curriculum with a career theme (such as health care, business and finance, or engineering). They are often structured as small learning communities and housed within larger traditional schools. Career academies can make education more relevant to high school students through personalized and contextual learning while preparing them for successful careers and postsecondary education. Local employers are critical to career academies and provide career awareness and work-based learning opportunities for their students.

Through this new initiative, States would award competitive grants to partnerships of school districts and local employers, creating 3,000 new career academies and increasing the number of students served by 50 percent. This means that half a million more students would have access to programs that studies suggest can lead to higher earnings and better academic outcomes.

Career academies would:

- **Increase student achievement and reduce the drop-out rate.** Although students who drop out, or are at risk of doing so, are often thought of as low achievers who need a watered-down curriculum, educators find that often the opposite is the case. Career academies can make a rigorous curriculum more relevant to students’ interests and provide work-based learning opportunities that keep students engaged in school. When students are more engaged in school, they are more likely to succeed academically and graduate. In fact, a 2000 study found that students enrolled in career academies have higher grade point averages, higher test scores, and lower dropout rates than non-career academy students in the same schools.
- **Increase postsecondary attainment.** Career academies can be designed so that high school and on-the-job and post-secondary training opportunities are better aligned. Through dual enrollment and dual credit agreements, participants would also obtain industry and postsecondary credentials sooner and with less student debt.

- **Help industries hire American workers.** Many industries have to look for foreign labor as they struggle with finding workers with the skills they need at home. For example, growing industries in science and technology have twice as many openings as we have workers who can do the job. Career academies that are designed with strong industry partnerships can help close this gap.
- **Improve the earning prospects of students.** Career academies also increase the future earnings of students. For example, a recent 2008 study found that career academy graduates made 11 percent (over \$2,000) more per year, on average, than non-academy graduates in schools that housed career academies within traditional schools.
- **Align with other efforts to ensure youth and adults have the skills and credentials our economy demands.** These efforts include:
  - **\$1.1 billion to support the reauthorization and reform of the Career and Technical Education (CTE) program.** The Administration's reauthorization proposal would transform the field by increasing the focus on outcomes and career pathways that ensure that what students learn is more closely aligned with the demands of the 21st century economy. Like career academies, our proposal would create stronger linkages between high school and postsecondary education.
  - **\$8 billion Community College to Career Fund.** Jointly administered by the Departments of Education and Labor, this fund would provide competitive grants to community college partnerships and States to support the development or expansion of training programs designed to meet employer needs for skilled workers, including the needs of companies seeking to bring back American jobs from overseas.