

LEGISLATION INITIATIVE

LEGISLATION: Reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act

AGENCY: Department of Education

DESCRIPTION: Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act, which governs career and technical education, will be reauthorized in the 2nd session of the 108th Congress. One of the topics that Congress will examine is the role of **distance learning** in vocational and technical education.

In February of 2002, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Deputy Secretary, commissioned a paper on the role of distance learning in vocational education. The paper was commissioned to review “cutting-edge” developments in distance learning and to assess the impact these developments might have on vocational and technical instruction in schools and colleges.

The report concluded that for vocational and technical instruction to benefit from “cutting-edge” developments, the Department of Education should create funding incentives to encourage broad consortium-type participation by community colleges and secondary schools in the Advanced Distributed Learning project (ADL) and the **Academic ADL Co-Laboratory in Wisconsin**.

ADL changes the way we create, deliver and manage learning content. ADL promotes a new, modular approach. The object-oriented approach conceives that a traditional course or training activity can be constructed from a series of learning objects. Because learning objects are discrete, modular structures, they can be assembled by educators, trainers, or instructional designers and applied in different instructional settings using the concept of *create once, but use everywhere, for anytime/anyplace learning*.

CONTACT: Kris Andrews, Assistant Vice President for Federal Relations, 608.263.3362

RECOMMENDATIONS
TO CONGRESS:

- Congress should articulate in the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Act reauthorization content development priorities and seed funding for the adoption of a single standard, such as the Sharable Content Object Reference Model (SCORM), which allows online content to be shared and used universally;
- Congress should encourage collaboration and partnership between the public and private sectors in the development and distribution of high quality courses, learning tools, and materials;
- Federal agencies and programs should be encouraged to adopt technical standards, such as SCORM, for the design of online courses and the metatagging of digital content;
- Research should be supported that assesses sharing of content developed according to SCORM standards.

SPECIFIC
REQUEST:

Amend the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Act to authorize \$10 million to enable the sixteen technical college districts and the 426 public school districts in Wisconsin to partner with the Academic Advanced Distributed Learning Co-Laboratory, located in Madison, WI, for the purpose of developing and distributing high quality on-line instruction, learning tools, and materials that can be shared and used economically and universally.

NATIONAL
SIGNIFICANCE:

The Advanced Distributed Learning Initiative (ADL) was launched under the leadership of the Office of the Secretary of Defense with the purpose of creating a distributed learning environment that permits the interoperability of learning tools, course content and learning systems on a global scale. The national ADL network is comprised of three Co-Labs: The ADL Co-Lab, located in Alexandria, is the central organization for guiding, coordinating, and integrating operations of all ADL Co-Labs; the Joint ADL Co-Lab, located in Orlando, which facilitates the implementation of ADL across the DoD; and the Academic ADL Co-Lab, located in Madison, which is the focal point for academic applications.

The Academic ADL Co-Lab is a nationwide initiative and a joint project of the University of Wisconsin System and the Wisconsin Technical College System. It is located in the University Research Park in Madison. The Academic ADL Co-Lab is established to:

- Research and develop advanced learning technologies;
- Assess ADL-compliant tools to determine whether and how much they will enhance teaching and learning in colleges and universities;
- Apply and evaluate assessment tools in the context of college and university curricula;
- Evaluate the Learning Management System to ensure that it meets the specific needs of colleges and universities.

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LEGISLATION INITIATIVES

LEGISLATION: Higher Education Act Reauthorization (HEA)

AGENCY: Department of Education

DESCRIPTION: The current authorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965 will expire on September 30, 2004. This requires that the 108th Congress consider extending the HEA in 2003-04.

The University of Wisconsin System offers the following major policy statements and recommendations.

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ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION:

While independent in practically every respect, the 13 freshman-sophomore UW Colleges of the University of Wisconsin System are headed by a single chancellor and administered by a centralized financial aid operation. As a result for purposes of the Student Support Services (SSS) program (but not for other TRIO programs), the Department of Education has ruled that the UW Colleges do not meet the standards set under 34 CFR 646.7 for having “independent” campuses. Under this interpretation, the entire two-year UW College system is eligible for no more than one SSS grant, which currently provides only \$512,000 for 480 students. This number represents only about 27 percent of those students who are eligible for funding under the program.

Most importantly, TRIO is essential in helping minority, under-served and first-generation students prepare for college. TRIO is crucial to our nation’s future.

Recommendations:

- Increase funding for TRIO programs;
- Amend section 402A of the Higher Education Act of 1965 to define the terms “Different Campus” and “Different Population.”

ACCOUNTABILITY:

The UW System was one of the first public higher education systems in the nation to adopt accountability reporting. We are proud of our accountability record, and we carefully consider each of the benchmarks we utilize to assess performance, including measures to: ensure access to UW System institutions; increase levels at which students continue in higher education and complete their degrees; improve learning competencies; promote learning environments that foster students’ ability to function in a dynamic world community; enhance learning environments outside the classroom; and demonstrate our efficient and effective stewardship of resources.

Recommendation:

- Congress should take into account existing models of accountability reporting and draw upon these experiences. Additional funding for performance improvement could be tied to institutional accountability using a continuous improvement model.

ACCREDITATION:

The UW System views the accreditation process as one that potentially benefits its institutions in critical ways. All UW institutions engage in institutional and program review as part of their normal operating practice. The UW System and its institutions are committed to meeting the requirements and conducting the large but necessary amount of work that needs to be undertaken with each accrediting procedure. However, specialized or professional accreditation agencies have often caused anxiety, as institutions are wary of what they view as outside interference by specialized accreditation agencies seeking to drive the curriculum, which results in “credit creep,” increased time-to-degree, and added costs for students.

CAMPUS-BASED PROGRAMS:

The Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, Work-Study, and Perkins Loan programs are collectively referred to as the “campus-based” programs. These programs are funded through HEA discretionary funding. The current statutory formulas allocating campus-based funding have historically distributed a share of funding to schools that have participated in the program the longest. These formulas have been identified as inequitable by the Administration’s Program Assessment Rating Tool. The Administration has proposed to phase in revised allocation formulas beginning in 2005. The UW System objects to this provision. The “conditional guarantee” mechanism has assured our institutions level funding each year. By phasing out this grandfathering, our funding in these programs would be cut dramatically.

CREDITS IN TRANSFER:

In the matter of accepting courses for transfer, the UW System believes it can meet the spirit of Title III without legislation and in a manner that will better address the differences in goals and standards of different kinds of postsecondary institutions. Further, in the 1st session of the 108th Congress, legislation was introduced that would establish reporting requirements. The cost of developing databases and writing programs to handle these requirements, in addition to the ongoing data entry costs, would be onerous and staggering.

DISTANCE EDUCATION:

The reauthorization of the Higher Education Act offers Congress an opportunity to create funding incentives to encourage broader use of distance learning. Specifically, this technology could promote expanded access for non-traditional adult learners; enhance quality through collaborative, online degree programs supported by revised public policy; and provide accountability via adoption of technical standards and reusable learning content.

Recommendations:

- Extend and expand the Distance Education Demonstration Project authorized in Sec. 486 to ensure access for learners at a distance;

- Establish a demonstration project aimed at overcoming state and local policy barriers to providing education to distance learners;
- Direct the Department of Education to promote and evaluate standards, such as the Sharable Content Object Reference Model (SCORM) for e-learning applications in higher education and to support research and assessment of sharing of content developed according to SCORM standards.

FIFTY PERCENT PROVISION:

During the 1st session of the 108th Congress, legislation was introduced that would give priority for new grants or contracts to institutions at which 50 percent of the undergraduate student enrollment is Pell Grant-eligible. There is not a single campus within the entire University of Wisconsin System (fourteen institutions in the UW System) at which 50 percent or more of the student body receives Pell Grants. The UW System is concerned about the detrimental effects this change could have on students at our institutions.

SIMPLIFICATION OF FINANCIAL AID:

The University of Wisconsin System supports simplifying and streamlining the financial aid process to assist students and parents who find the process difficult and cumbersome. Areas for possible consideration of streamlining include single disbursements, 30-day rule and pro-rating of loans, and non-germane student eligibility questions on FAFSA.

Recommendation:

- We encourage Congress to make the rules more uniform across programs, to streamline the more complicated rules, and to eliminate unnecessary regulations.

STUDENT AID:

Student financial aid programs are effective at increasing access to postsecondary education, particularly for low-income students. Despite substantial gains in overall participation in postsecondary education, individuals from low-income families remain less likely to participate in postsecondary education than other individuals. Further, we are aware of concerns that raising loan limits may be used by some policymakers to reduce federal grant program support. Nevertheless, without an increase in the federal limits, borrowers increasingly seek private loans.

Recommendations:

- It is essential that Congress reduce the financial barriers to higher education for low-income students by providing adequate funding for the Pell Grant program and campus-based programs;
- Congress should raise the Stafford loan limits.

TEACHER QUALITY:

Title II, which provides for Teacher Quality initiatives, has furthered the effectiveness of initial teacher preparation and improved professional development for PK-12 practitioners. Wisconsin’s high level of success in placing “highly qualified” teachers in every classroom is a direct result of the

strong partnerships between our universities and colleges (public, private, and technical) and PK-12 schools. Outcomes that have emerged from these partnerships include mentoring programs for new teachers, innovative professional development opportunities for experienced teachers, and a renewed commitment for accountability in teaching and learning.

Recommendations:

- Continued authorization and funding for partnership grants is critical.
- Propose a change in the language to require, rather than recommend, broad-based partnerships among institutions of higher education, state education agencies, local education agencies, community colleges, and other community entities in order to effectively increase teacher quality.

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LEGISLATION INITIATIVES

FUND NAME: Changes to the SSS program grant

AGENCY: Department of Education

DESCRIPTION: The Student Support Services (SSS) program within TRIO provides opportunities for low-income individuals who are first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities. The program is designed to increase the likelihood of these students to complete their college degree. The SSS program also gives grants to current SSS participants who are receiving Pell Grants.

The purpose of the grant is to assist with the financial burdens of attending and completing an undergraduate degree. The grant award is designed to close the gap between a student's financial aid and unmet need (and/or) reduce loan indebtedness (and/or) the need to work excessive hours to make ends meet. The goal of SSS program and grant is to insure that student's progress with their educational endeavors.

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NOTES: Current regulation makes this grant available only to students who are in their first 2 years of postsecondary education, who are receiving Federal Pell Grants, and current participants in the student support services program. Students who have completed their first 2 years of postsecondary education and who are receiving Federal Pell Grants may also receive the grant only if the institution demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Secretary that these students are at high risk of dropping out; and the institution will first meet the needs of all its eligible first- and second-year students for services.

Our recommendation is to expand grant availability to include upper level students and increase the funding of the SSS grant to include this additional population, deleting the provision that demonstration to the Secretary is required to fund students beyond their first 2 years.

IMPACT ON
WISCONSIN:

Benefit to Wisconsin. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, one-quarter of freshmen are from low-income backgrounds, almost one-third are nonwhite, and 40 percent are the first in their families to attend college.

Often less than adequately prepared than other students from higher-income backgrounds socially, academically and financially, these students are more likely to leave school. Academic support and adequate financial assistance with the financial burdens of attending and completing an undergraduate degree help improve the odds that students from all levels of income will attend and graduate, and contribute to the state's general welfare.

Benefit to UW System institutions. During the first two years of the grant program, which began in 2001-02, UW-Stout has awarded over \$100,000 to 116 active participants in Student Support Services or Disability Services programs, improving the likelihood of

retaining this group of students. Expanding the grant program to include upper level students will improve retention and graduation rates of this at risk population and increase the resources available to UW System institutions to create greater support for all qualified students, improving the odd that students from all economic backgrounds will be retained and graduate.

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LEGISLATION INITIATIVE

LEGISLATION: Changes to TRIO Regulations

AGENCY: Department of Education

DESCRIPTION: TRIO Programs are educational opportunity outreach programs designed to motivate and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds. TRIO includes six outreach and support programs targeted to serve and assist low-income, first-generation college students, and students with disabilities to progress through college and beyond.

The Student Support Services (SSS) program within TRIO provides opportunities for academic development, assists students with basic college requirements, and serves to motivate students towards graduating from college. The SSS program also gives grants to current SSS participants who are receiving Pell Grants.

To receive assistance, students must be enrolled or accepted for enrollment in a program of postsecondary education at a grantee institution. Only low-income individuals who are first-generation college students and students with disabilities and a need for academic support are eligible to participate in SSS projects.

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SPECIFIC
REQUEST: Amend section 402A of the Higher Education Act of 1965 to define the terms “Different Campus” and “Different Population.”

IMPACT ON
WISCONSIN: While independent in practically every respect, the thirteen, freshman-sophomore colleges of the University of Wisconsin System are headed by a single chancellor and administered by a centralized financial aid operation. As a result, for purposes of the Student Support Services program (but not for other TRIO programs), the Department of Education has ruled that the UW Colleges do not meet the standards set under 34 CFR 646.7 for having “independent” campuses. Because of this interpretation, the entire two-year UW college system is eligible for no more than one grant, which currently provides only \$502,000 for 480 students. This number represents only about 27 percent of those students who are eligible for funding under the program.