

## Addressing the Career and Technical Faculty Shortage

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In recent years, the United States has been grappling with a critical shortage of Career and Technical Education (CTE) faculty, a challenge that jeopardizes the quality and accessibility of vocational education nationwide. The shortage stems from many factors, including a lack of candidates in hiring pools, strict academic minimum qualifications, and issues related to employee retention. This shortage poses a significant threat to the workforce development pipeline and the future of CTE programs across the country, according to the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) on CTE workforce shortages and related issues.

Reasons for the shortage include the mismatch between the demand for CTE faculty and the pool of qualified candidates as well as a lack of uniformity in the recognition of years of work and industry credentials in establishing minimum faculty qualifications. Many CTE fields require specialized knowledge and experience, making it challenging to find individuals with the requisite skills and credentials. Additionally, the perception of CTE as a secondary career path compared to traditional academia often dissuades potential candidates from pursuing careers in vocational education. Policies put in place by colleges, states, faculty unions, and accreditation bodies can further limit candidate pools by eliminating candidates that lack certain credentials such as associate degrees.

Retention of CTE faculty also poses a significant challenge. Limited opportunities for professional development, comparatively lower salaries, and insufficient support systems contribute to high turnover rates among CTE educators, according to the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) report on retention challenges in CTE fields. Without adequate support and incentives to remain in their roles, talented faculty members are at risk of leaving the profession, exacerbating the shortage and disrupting continuity in CTE programs.

### NCATC Collaborations Will Find a Solution

NCATC collaborations focus on ideas and priorities such as the following:

*Enhanced Recruitment Efforts:* Implement targeted recruitment strategies to attract candidates from diverse backgrounds, including industry professionals seeking a career change, recent graduates with relevant expertise, and retirees interested in sharing their knowledge.

*Investment in Professional Development:* Establish robust professional development programs to support CTE faculty in honing their skills, staying abreast of industry trends, and advancing their careers. Providing opportunities for ongoing learning and growth can enhance job satisfaction and retention rates.

*Competitive Compensation Packages:* Advocate for competitive salaries and comprehensive benefits packages for CTE faculty to attract and retain top talent. Recognizing the value of their

contributions and offering financial incentives can help mitigate turnover and encourage long-term commitment.

*Collaborative Partnerships:* Foster partnerships between educational institutions, industry stakeholders, and government agencies to create pathways for CTE faculty development and employment. By leveraging resources and expertise from multiple sectors, we can address the shortage collaboratively and sustainably.

*Digital Literacy:* Equitable access involves digital literacy programs designed to help individuals navigate online space, understand cybersecurity, and utilize digital tools for personal and professional growth.

*Inclusive Policy:* Equitable access requires public and private policies that prioritize closing the digital divide.

*Public-Private Partnerships:* Equitable access requires collaboration between governments, private companies, and non-profits to leverage the different resources and expertise they bring to addressing the gaps in internet availability.

*Community Engagement:* Equitable access requires understanding the specific needs of different communities.

## An Example of What Can Be Done at the State Level

Washington State's High Wage High Demand (HWHD) efforts exemplify the positive steps that can be taken at the state level to address the CTE faculty shortage. By offering competitive salaries and targeted recruitment incentives for faculty in high-demand fields such as advanced manufacturing and technology, Washington aims to attract and retain qualified educators.

## Conclusion

Addressing the shortage of CTE faculty requires concerted efforts at the national, state, and local levels. By implementing strategic recruitment strategies, investing in professional development, prioritizing competitive compensation, and fostering collaborative partnerships, we can cultivate a skilled and sustainable workforce of CTE educators equipped to meet the needs of our evolving economy and empower the next generation of skilled professionals.

## Additional Resources

- The Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE): [https://www.acteonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Teach\\_Ag\\_Paper\\_FINAL-1.pdf](https://www.acteonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Teach_Ag_Paper_FINAL-1.pdf)
- U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE): <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/index.html>
- The State Board of Community and Technical Colleges, Washington State. Workforce Education Investment Act (January 2024)