Notes/Response to the First Annual Review of CTE Data

Comments re: Completion thresholds and the method of calculating data

Recognizing this is a new attempt to calculate CE Career Tech program data, the following comments and questions should not be construed as being derogatory, but instead, food for thought about how the data was collected and compiled and what the end results were supposed to indicate. If the data is to give us an accurate picture of CTE programs' cost and success then we need to look at how the data is collected, compiled and then interpreted.

Two significant areas need to be addressed. First, open enrollment and secondly, student mastery of competencies as related to program, and more importantly, the student's personal goals.

Since the far majority of CTE courses/programs are delivered in an open-entry/exit format, the method used to collect enrollment statistics becomes an important issue if we want meaningful data. Students who enroll on the credit side of the house are not actually counted as enrolled until after the colleges "Census" day. This allows students that are "lookie loo's" to sample the course and then leave without being counted as a negative statistic. In some cases the Census day might occur after as much as 20% of the class time has occurred. Therefore, enrollment numbers for the colleges have been "pared down," producing a more accurate number as a basis for further research. The importance of this is that enrollment numbers are frequently used as the denominator in the formulas used to calculate; Retention %, Completion%, Transfer%, Placements%, etc.

We believe the number of students shown on the CE Annual Data Report likely reflects all CTE students enrolled, without consideration of those students who might not have continued during what would have been the colleges 20% Census reporting time. This might account for the 27 to 30 % student loss shown on the annual report as the < 25% of class time completion threshold

Another question is, what was the basis for the "Completion Thresholds?" Were individual program hours used to calculate the data? Or do they reflect hours of separate courses within a program? With the advent of enhanced funding, approximately two years ago, all single course "programs" e.g. 625 hr. Auto Technician Program, are now multiple courses offerings that constitute the original total program hours. This should cause a disparity in data collected and cause confusion when comparing earlier years to the last one or two years.

In addition, CTE students frequently enroll in the middle of a semester, however the course/program may not end until the middle of another semester. If we are gathering data at the semester level we are going to have difficulty identifying completions, since instructors may have assigned a grade of A thru C or INC for the

semester grade, not giving the student their "final" grade until the end of the program which might be 6 months or longer from the original starting date – whatever semester that might be. The question then needs to asked, does a grade of incomplete indicate a drop or failure in the data collected? And how are the students followed through various semesters? In the BIT program a student might be enroll in one courses during the middle of two semesters and then not return until 6 months later and again enroll in the next course in the middle of that semester. Were these students then identified as falling in to one of the "less than X% thresholds?

Additionally there is an issue of the 100% Completion Threshold. CTE students are generally required to complete certain tasks in order to complete their program. The number of hours of a program has always been an estimate of time required to complete/master those tasks. Some programs recognize that students learn at different paces and allow students to complete programs as soon as all tasks have been successfully completed. For example a student may complete a 600 hour program in 525 hours. Could this account for the low 4% - 100% Completion Threshold indicated on the report?

Many CTE programs have students enrolled that are only interested in up-dating or refreshing a certain skill that is offered within the curriculum. That student may only attend a small fraction of the total hours but still have met their educational goal.

We believe the definition of "Completion" needs to be re-defined. If we as an institution are only looking at seat time and whether a program certificate or award was issued, we are missing the boat and doing the students and programs a great disservice.

The Awards screen on the district ISIS system reflects "official" certificates awarded to students in CTE programs. However some programs have not developed certificates for shorter portions of the program (modules) that would lead to employment or a section of the program requested by an industry partner. For instance, the welding program enrolled a large number of students from NASSCO to receive training, consisting of only a portion of the programs curriculum. These students, since they did not finish the complete program and did not receive a certificate, would show up and be counted as "enrolled" and "dropped" or fall into one of the "less than X%" thresholds even though they accomplished their educational goals as requested by industry.

In conclusion, this first attempt to collect CTE program data in this manner should be commended for bringing to the forefront the difficulty associated with collecting accurate and relevant information for non-credit CTE programs. The State of California has been struggling with this same issue for many years. The state VTEA Core Information Reports, which are derived from MIS data collected from the

colleges, have purposely excluded non-credit information from their reports for many of the same reasons mentioned above. When we questioned the researcher who programs these reports as to why non-credit has not been included for the last 12 years he said " due to the open-entry nature of the classes and the varied student goals, the data as collected would be useless, or at best, inaccurate information to send the campuses."

CTE recommends that a committee be formed, consisting of representatives from CTE faculty, management and district researchers to discuss the above issues and how to best address them. If we are truly interested in reviewing the effectiveness of our programs it will be necessary to agree on what constitutes a student success and discuss method to report, collect and compile enrollment data that is representative of our unique program operation and varied student goals.