



JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

BUILDING PATHWAYS TO CREDENTIALS, CAREERS, AND ECONOMIC MOBILITY



The Trump Administration will face a number of critical education, workforce development, and employment challenges that must be addressed to help Americans get back to work including:

- ▶ *Continued unemployment in many distressed communities across the country*
- ▶ *Lagging educational and skills attainment*
- ▶ *The need to invest in our educational pipeline and “upskilling” of our workforce*
- ▶ *Meeting the skills requirements of America’s high demand employers*
- ▶ *Economic mobility that is out of reach for far too many Americans*

There is a direct correlation between Americans’ education and skill levels and the nation’s collective economic success. We must create bold and scalable solutions to harness the enormous untapped talent and potential of all Americans and meet the skill needs of America’s employers. And while economic development and job creation investments will be essential for helping distressed communities generate new employment opportunities for their residents, corresponding talent development efforts will be equally critical to ensure equitable access to good jobs and prosperity.

Jobs for the Future (JFF) urges the Trump Administration to spur the development of innovative and evidence-based strategies designed to help a broad range of individuals, including those who are unemployed and underprepared, so they may successfully access, complete, and attain the postsecondary credentials and skills that are needed for family-supporting careers. In all of these efforts, it will be vital to ensure that individuals who are most in need have access to the full range of services and jobs that ensure economic mobility for all Americans.

The Need

While the U.S. economy has certainly improved since the great recession, far too many Americans are still without jobs, and far too many employers cannot find the skilled workers they need to remain competitive. Our current unemployment rate translates to 7.8 million Americans who are looking for work, with approximately 2 million of those individuals among the long-term unemployed. And these numbers do not include the many Americans who have given up searching for work, who are discouraged, underemployed, or who are marginally attached to the labor force. In addition, stagnating wages have made it harder for Americans to find family-supporting careers.

Large discrepancies in educational attainment, employment rates, and income levels across certain populations make it clear that our economic growth and prosperity have not been shared equitably. Many of these individuals are underprepared for the jobs that are in demand and are not sure where to access the information, training, and credentials needed for family-supporting careers.

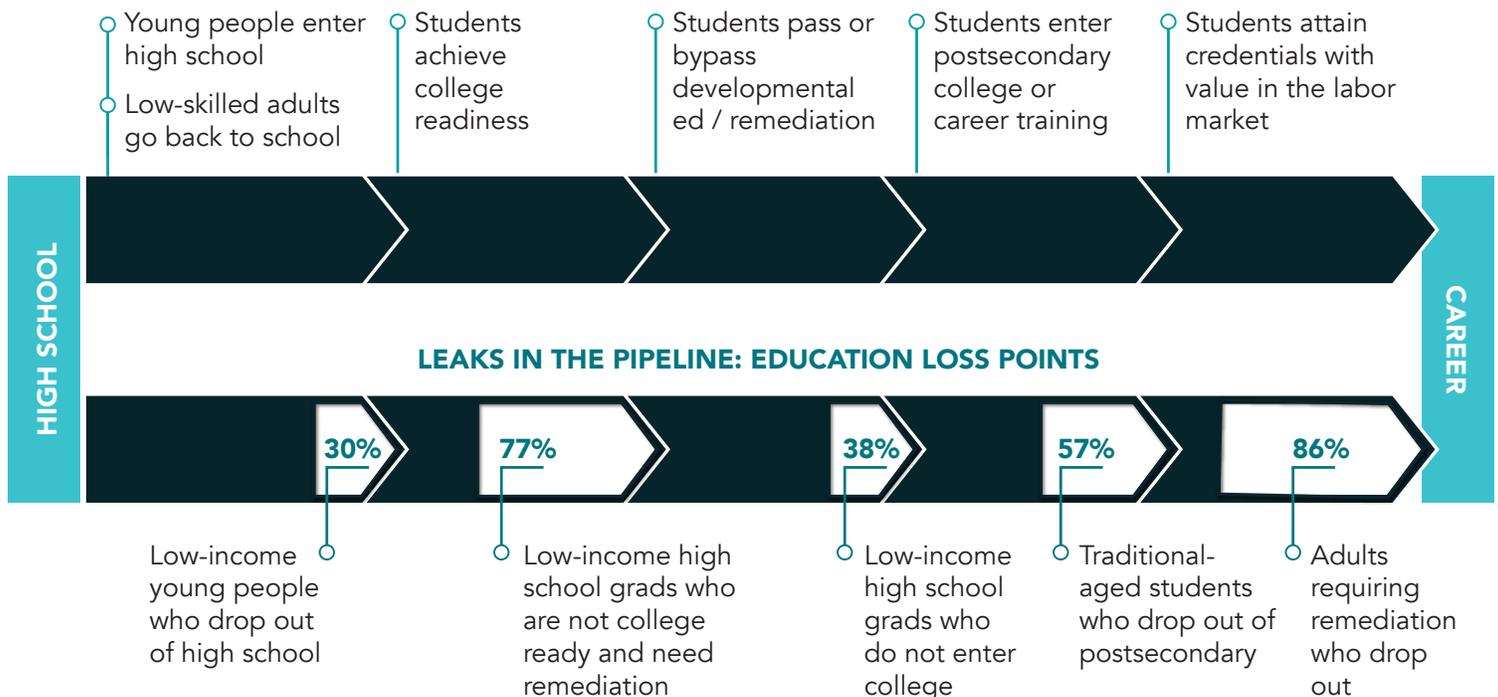
The jobs being created today are fundamentally different than the jobs that have been lost over the past few decades. According to Georgetown University’s Center on Education and the Workforce, the percentage of U.S. jobs requiring postsecondary education and training is expected to reach a new high of 65 percent in 2020.¹ Yet the United States is projected to face shortages of 3 million workers with associate’s degrees or higher and 5 million workers with technical certificates and credentials by 2020.² There is a dire need for skilled workers and mounting

evidence that postsecondary education has a direct impact on earnings. Moreover, as reflected in Figure 1, the shifting needs of the current economy make it clear that to attain real upward mobility, workers will need to be equipped with the skills that make them of high value to employers and able to adapt to changes in the workplace—skills like critical thinking, creativity, communication skills, and collaboration.

JFF’s Perspective

The recommendations contained in this paper reflect JFF’s unique perspective on addressing the challenges described above across K-12, postsecondary, and workforce development programming. They also reflect our long-held belief that supply-side investments and interventions must be closely aligned with demand-side trends. JFF is a national and trusted leader in bridging education and work to increase economic mobility and strengthen the economy. We work to ensure that all underprepared young people

Figure 1. Economic Opportunity Pipeline



¹ Carnevale, Anthony P., Nicole Smith, & Jeff Strohl. 2013. Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements Through 2020. Washington, DC: Georgetown Public Policy Institute, Georgetown University. ² See: Carnevale et al., 2013.

and workers have the skills and credentials needed to succeed in the economy by catalyzing changes in our education and workforce delivery systems. Working with our partners, JFF designs, drives adoption of, and supports implementation of innovative and scalable education and training models and systems that lead from college readiness to career advancement. We also develop and advocate for the federal and state policies needed to support these solutions.

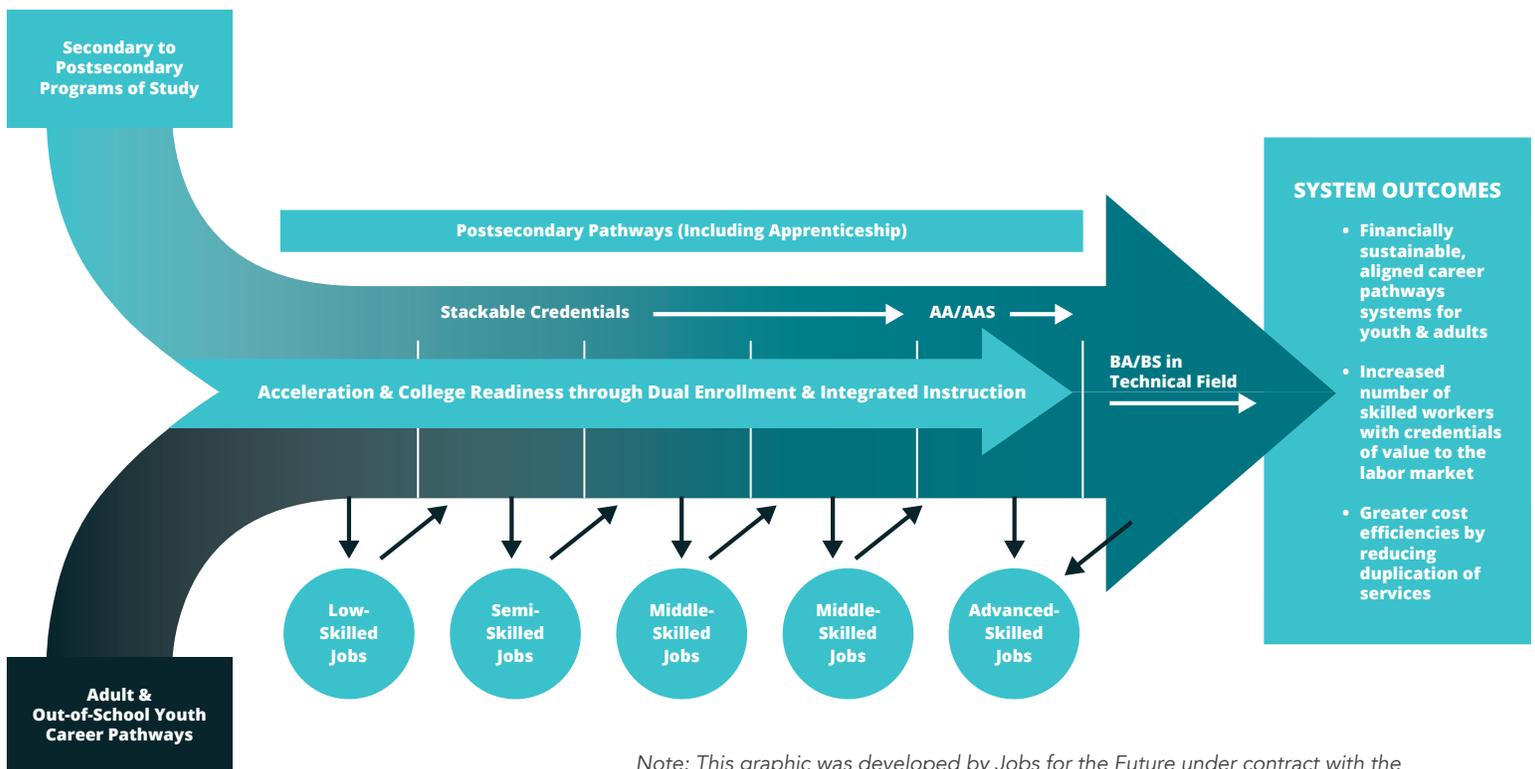
A Pathways Frame

JFF and others who work at the intersection of education and work have come to realize that college and career pathways approaches, and the strategies that combine to form these initiatives, show great promise for helping all students, especially those with barriers to education and employment, succeed. Pathways approaches provide structured sequences of education and training coursework, mapped to show the most accelerated routes to credentials. Combined

Pathways Approaches Offer

- ▶ Sequenced coursework
- ▶ Labor market alignment
- ▶ Robust counseling and supports
- ▶ Multiple entry and exit points
- ▶ Stackable credentials
- ▶ Flexible scheduling
- ▶ Contextualized learning
- ▶ Acceleration strategies
- ▶ Opportunities for work-based learning

Figure II. Integrated Career Pathways



Note: This graphic was developed by Jobs for the Future under contract with the U.S. Department of Education on the Advancing CTE in Career Pathways project.

with wraparound supports and robust counseling, pathways strategies help students persist and complete postsecondary programs aligned to labor market needs.

JFF has been integrally involved in the design and development of systemic academic and career pathways initiatives. These initiatives serve students, beginning in middle school, through adult workers, helping them transition to and complete postsecondary education and training, emerging with valuable credentials, prepared for high-demand jobs.

Recommendations

Helping All Americans Succeed on Pathways to Credentials, Careers, and Economic Success

JFF proposes the following recommendations for development of an education and workforce pipeline in the United States that helps all Americans succeed. Our recommendations are designed to achieve the systemic changes necessary to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population of students, jobseekers, and workers—as well as the skill requirements of employers in a highly competitive global economy.

Our 10 recommendations are organized around the four framing principles:

- ▶ Aligning systems for college, career, and economic success
- ▶ Reforming student aid and supports
- ▶ Creating innovative solutions for postsecondary programming and student success
- ▶ Connecting education to workforce success

These recommendations build upon what we have learned through our years of work in the field, address urgent policy issues facing the new Administration, and reflect our belief that federal policy and investments should build upon evidence-based solutions as well as spur innovation and continuous improvement.

I. Aligning Systems for College, Career, and Economic Success

America's economic prosperity largely depends on the education and skills levels of its citizenry. The country needs a comprehensive education and workforce development system that is easily accessed, flexible, and meets the skill needs of workers and employers alike. The United States has made significant progress in aligning the multiple education, training, and economic development programs that make up our workforce preparation system. In this section, we offer recommendations for ways to continue to break down barriers that impede broader system alignment and encourage reforms that will benefit workers and employers in the 21st-century economy.

In some cases, systemic reforms are most appropriately driven at a regional level, particularly where they address the needs of regional economies. In others, such as in postsecondary education, state-level reforms are needed. In all cases, the federal government should align the work of its own agencies to forge coordinated, efficient solutions to complex education, workforce, and economic development challenges.

1. Matching Education and Skills to Regional Economic Demands.

Because of the importance of regional economies, education and workforce development systems must work seamlessly with economic development efforts to meet the education and skill demands of regional employers. To do this, strategic regional partnerships must be fostered to identify the strengths, challenges, resources, and needs of communities and to collectively carry out needed actions. Regional partnerships are especially important in distressed communities where economic development and job creation strategies are necessary for creating employment opportunities for residents.

The New Administration Should:

▶ **Create regional rebuilding and reskilling America grants.** We recommend that the new Administration provide grants to economically distressed regions similar to the Bush Administration’s WIRED initiative that spurred today’s sector-focused job training efforts. Such grants would fund regional economic and workforce development efforts to rebuild local economies, create jobs, and prepare workers with the skills needed for these new jobs. Under such an approach, regional collaboratives would commit to system alignment in support of sector-focused job creation and workforce development efforts, building career pathways to meet the skill needs of their economies.

Grants, which in part could be funded with H-1B visa fees, would augment regional sector and career pathways efforts established under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, incenting maximum system collaboration and providing relief from federal program requirements in exchange for desired outcomes. Grants could also be funded jointly through multiple agencies (e.g., the Departments of Commerce, Labor, Education, and Health and Human Services), include state/regional matching requirements, and result in the following:

- Regional economic development strategies for distressed communities
 - Regional reskilling collaboratives that include partners from the local workforce, education, and economic development systems; employers; and community-based organizations including philanthropic organizations, to jointly develop and implement comprehensive human capital strategies to address the education and skill demands of their regions
 - Industry partnerships in high-demand sectors in targeted regions to guide the development of career pathways in relevant fields of study.
- ▶ **Provide infrastructure training funds.** In any infrastructure-focused initiative, include a significant,

dedicated education and training component. JFF strongly urges that these funds be administered through the existing workforce development system, not as a standalone or parallel investment, and that they require priority access for low-income or long-term unemployed individuals from distressed communities to programs that offer “earn and learn” as well as career pathways opportunities for education and training.

2. Make Credential Completion a Reality for All.

Traditionally, federal higher education policy has focused on providing students with access to postsecondary education. However we now understand that completion and outcomes are equally as important. Over the past several decades, we have seen more students enroll in college but seen little improvement in the number of students completing a postsecondary credential. To move the needle on completion, credential attainment, and career success, systemic changes are necessary to incent innovation, adoption of evidence-based practices, and changes in the design and delivery of education and training in states and local communities.

The New Administration Should:

▶ **Establish postsecondary completion grants.** Many of the policy barriers to reform our nation’s higher education system exist at the state and local system levels. State policy changes should be incentivized through grants that focus on scaling evidence-based practices to increase completion of postsecondary programs through the development of guided academic and career pathways approaches.

The following evidence-based strategies should be featured and incentivized:

- Establish state plans for alignment of education, workforce development, economic development, human services, and other programs in support of system-wide pathways to postsecondary credentials.

- Redesign assessment, placement, and counseling services to map accelerated routes to credential attainment and enhance wraparound supports.
- Accelerate and improve delivery of developmental education and adult basic education through co-enrollment, integrated service delivery, and other proven approaches.
- Support the creation of stackable, portable credentials aligned with on-ramps and off-ramps and progressive levels of employment for youth and adults.
- Engage employers and use labor market information to identify high-demand industry sectors and feed that information directly into the design and delivery of education and workforce development programming.
- Establish statewide prior learning assessment policies and incentivize articulation policies that ensure uniform credit accumulation and credit transfer.
- Enact outcomes-based funding models for state postsecondary funding.

▶ **Spark innovation through institutional grants.**

Grants to institutions of higher education, such as community colleges or consortia of colleges, should be provided to support the development and scaling of innovative approaches to improve teaching and learning in postsecondary education, with a particular focus on the needs of nontraditional students. Grants should be designed through a multitiered evidence structure (similar to the Education Innovation and Research Program in the Every Student Succeeds Act) and should also incorporate lessons learned through the TAACCCT initiative.

▶ **Refocus on student outcomes.** To dramatically improve student outcomes and increase the return on investment on federal higher education funding, the administration should consider ways to more closely tie student outcomes to federal postsecondary initiatives, including student aid. Applying student outcomes to higher education programs could take the form

GUIDED PATHWAYS AND STUDENT SUCCESS CENTERS

The guided pathways movement is an effort to help colleges and universities provide clearer roadmaps to credentials, specify course sequences, identify progress milestones, establish program learning outcomes, and provide extensive supports and counseling to ensure that students complete their programs of study and prepare for employment and further education in their fields of interest. Guided pathways save time and money—and significantly boost student success. While research is ongoing, the data is promising for guided pathways strategies. The Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Columbia University, has found that students are more likely to complete a degree in a timely fashion if they choose a program and develop an academic plan early on, have a clear understanding of the courses needed to complete a credential, and receive guidance and support to help them stay on plan.

Student Success Centers organize states' community colleges around common actions to accelerated efforts to improve persistence and completion. Thirteen states have created Student Success Centers and a peer learning network that focuses on sharing and spreading evidence-based innovations. With 49 percent of the nation's public two-year colleges located in the 13 states with established Student Success Centers, and 58 percent of all community college students in the nation enrolled at these institutions, the reach of the Centers is substantial. Significantly, 67 percent of all minority students and 55 percent of Pell Grant recipients are enrolled at the colleges in these states.

of incentives to states and/or institutions, refocusing accreditation efforts on student outcomes, or eventual outcome requirements in exchange for federal student aid funding.

3. Break Down Federal Silos.

Too often, the solutions that government pushes forward to address gaps in education and training are shaped by the silos in which they are created. For example, education-focused initiatives may ignore the input of employers, and workforce-focused initiatives may not address housing barriers of participants. And to further exacerbate this problem, silos at the federal government only repeat and multiply as initiatives translate to state and then local levels. This siloed approach comes at the expense of a more comprehensive, systemic approach to tackling significant human capital problems in our economy—one that works across education, workforce, economic development, housing, health and human services, and other related systems to best promote the success of participants.

The New Administration Should:

- ▶ **Build upon cross-agency workgroups and initiatives** that are focused on system alignment for addressing common problems/solutions.
- ▶ **Create initiatives where local and regional partner programs are afforded significant flexibility in federal funding** to braid and use resources in ways that allow for the development of comprehensive solutions.

II. Reforming Student Aid and Supports

In this section we offer recommendations for how federal financial aid and counseling supports should be reshaped to meet the increasingly complex needs of today's students and increase the number of postsecondary students who attain needed credentials.

4. Financial Aid that Fits.

Today's college students are more diverse than ever, and their responsibilities and needs are also more complex. Many postsecondary students are supporting families; others are working adults looking to forge new career paths; some never completed high school; still others are veterans looking for ways to translate the skills gained through their military service to postsecondary education and a private sector career; and some are reentering the workforce after involvement in the criminal justice system. Given the diversity of the population that postsecondary institutions serve, it is essential that we allow flexibility in federal financial aid policies so we can assist all students along pathways to the attainment of postsecondary credentials.

The New Administration Should:

- ▶ **Simplify the FAFSA application process** to make financial aid more accessible to all students, maintaining allowance for prior-year information and creating simple pathways for automatic student aid qualification for families already enrolled in other means-tested federal benefits programs.
- ▶ **Restore and make permanent year-round Pell grants** to ensure that students can continue to take classes and gain credits all year—speeding their way to college and credential completion.
- ▶ **Maintain the partial restoration of the Ability to Benefit provision** of the Higher Education Act (for students in career pathways programs), and encourage the use of this provision by providing guidance to financial aid offices in colleges across the country.
- ▶ **Allow Pell grants to cover the costs of prior learning assessments**, which enable skilled adults (including veterans) to apply their college-level knowledge, skills, and prior credentials to college credit and earned credentials (an important acceleration strategy).

▶ **Design financial aid to reflect the needs of today's nontraditional students**, including recognition that many working students must “stop in” and “stop out” of postsecondary education and training. Policies should support the development of on-ramps and off-ramps that are aligned to stackable credentials.

▶ **Expand experimental site authority to test** alternative credentialing, competency-based, and online models (described more fully in recommendation 8); early college high school initiatives (see recommendation 6); and programming for targeted populations such as youth and adults transitioning from the criminal justice system, with ongoing, robust evaluations of effectiveness and return on investment.

▶ **Pursue financial aid pilot initiatives that focus on affordability and outcomes**, including models of risk sharing for institutions of higher education

5. Supports for Success.

Making decisions about careers, coursework, and programs of study can prove to be an impenetrable maze for too many students. To succeed in achieving a credential or degree, students need guidance and counseling on how to: select an academic or career pathway; access public benefits and assistance; support their education financially; identify work or internship opportunities; and persist through the many academic and nonacademic barriers they will face on their journey to a credential. This support is especially important for students who are first-generation college goers, out-of-school youth whom the traditional education system may have already failed, students reentering education after time away, or students juggling family obligations. Too often, students don't find the supports they need, costing time and money when they take unnecessary courses or shift directions midstream. We must do more to support all students, especially those with barriers to academic success, as they navigate the financial, academic, and other systems required to obtain a postsecondary credential.

BACK ON TRACK

Of the 5.5 million disconnected or opportunity youth, only 1 percent will have completed a postsecondary degree by the age of 28. Postsecondary credential completion can become a reality for this population with the right program designs, partnerships, and resources. JFF's Back on Track model uses a three-phase approach for reengaging youth and young adults who are off-track: (1) enriched preparation, (2) postsecondary bridging, and (3) first-year supports.

Outcomes for Back on Track

A Brandeis University evaluation of a national Postsecondary Success Initiative identified the Back on Track framework as an evidence-based strategy for building pathways to postsecondary credentials for formerly disconnected youth. The evaluation indicated that:

- ▶ High numbers of participating youth (57 percent) entered postsecondary education.
- ▶ Evidence of success in higher education: 60 percent enrolled in full-time study and over 50 percent completed a first year.

The New Administration Should:

- ▶ **Expand and enhance federal student college and career counseling and support programs** to focus on outcomes and success for low-income and historically underserved populations.
- ▶ **Provide incentives for alignment of federal financial aid with programs that offer supportive services** such as assistance with counseling, child care, transportation, and other financial supports for daily living, including access to means-tested federal and state programs for which low-income students and special populations may be eligible.

▶ **Incent innovations in advising, course/career mapping, and strategies such as student support centers and guided pathways approaches** that can help students to persist and complete, with a focus on the evidence base and outcomes.

III. Innovative Solutions for Postsecondary Programming and Student Success

Rather than simply continuing past policies and practices regardless of the effectiveness, government at its best can serve as an instigator of innovation and a promotor of best practices. In this section, we offer recommendations for the next frontier of supporting new innovation and scaling evidence-based practices to dramatically increase postsecondary attainment and success in the economy for our nation's youth and adults.

6. Accelerate to Achieve.

For decades, when students have fallen behind—whether in K-12 or postsecondary education—efforts to assist them have focused on remediation. But most students never catch up, finding remedial coursework to be unengaging and never ending. Evidence has shown that strategies that focus on acceleration rather than remediation are more effective at bringing students back in line with their peers and often even move them ahead. The value of acceleration is evident in the dramatic success of early college high schools that provide low-income and first generation high school students with opportunities to progress into and succeed in postsecondary education. Similarly, co-enrollment and integrated models for disconnected or opportunity youth and underprepared adults, such as in Washington's I-BEST program and in states participating in the Accelerating Opportunity program, have been proven to accelerate the attainment of college-level credits and industry-recognized postsecondary credentials by providing students with basic skill education at the same time as they are attaining postsecondary credits in their field of study.

EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS

Early college high schools combine high school and college in a rigorous, supportive environment that enables struggling students to graduate with college credit and the tools for postsecondary success. Schools with an early college design provide students with the opportunity to save time and money while working toward a postsecondary credential, are powerful motivators for students to work hard and meet intellectual challenges. Early college designs enable more students, particularly low-income and minority students, to experience rigorous high school and college coursework that leads to improved outcomes.

Early College High School Outcomes

Numerous research studies have shown that early college high schools significantly increase students' rates of college success and are proven for helping underrepresented populations transition to and succeed in postsecondary education. In 2015, a study of more than 280 schools serving 80,000 students in early college programs demonstrated the following outcomes:

- ▶ 90 percent of early college students receive a diploma compared to 78 percent nationally.
- ▶ 30 percent of early college students earn an associate's degree or certificate with their diploma compared to very few nationally.
- ▶ 94 percent of early college students earn college credits in high school, compared to 10 percent of students nationally.
- ▶ 86 percent of early college graduates who enroll stay for their second year compared to 72 percent of college students nationally

The New Administration Should:

- ▶ **Encourage the expansion of successful models** such as early college high school and co-enrollment/integrated models for adult basic education.
- ▶ **Continue and expand experimental site authority focused on providing Pell funding** to students enrolled in early college high school and dual enrollment opportunities, with strong focus on defining standards of success, equity, and evaluation to prove the return on investment.
- ▶ **Create an Office of Postsecondary Transitions at the Department of Education** to focus on the critical transition points between high school and

ACCELERATING OPPORTUNITY

Building off of lessons learned from the evidence-based I-BEST model, JFF's Accelerating Opportunity initiative works with 85 colleges in 7 states to increase the number of adult basic education students who enter postsecondary education and earn credentials that lead to family-supporting careers. Accelerating Opportunity helps underprepared adults earn credentials and higher-wage jobs faster by combining the adult basic education and career and technical training they need into one integrated curriculum. Accelerating Opportunity helps participating adults advance along clear pathways to postsecondary credentials in high-demand occupational areas.

Accelerating Opportunity Outcomes

A formal evaluation is ongoing, but as of March 2016:

- ▶ 10,701 total enrollments
- ▶ 12,509 total credentials earned
- ▶ 34 percent of enrolling students earning over 12 credits

postsecondary opportunities, with a strong focus on expansion of early college high school and dual enrollment opportunities and promotion of best practices. The office would also focus on bridging students from adult education, WIOA Youth, and other nontraditional routes, into postsecondary programs, with a focus on expanding best practices that work for these students.

7. Learning that Matters.

To succeed in postsecondary and careers, students, jobseekers, and workers need more than basic academic knowledge and technical skills. In our modern knowledge-based economy, employers are looking for individuals with the ability to think creatively, work collaboratively, solve problems effectively, and communicate clearly. This requires that we refocus K-12, postsecondary, and learning experiences in workforce programs on the skills and competencies that will set students up to succeed in college and careers.

When students are developing knowledge, skills, and competencies simultaneously, they learn more efficiently and are more engaged in their learning. And as these students move on to the workforce, they will be stronger employees and better equipped to take advantage of the opportunities presented by shifts in the economy. It is essential that we expand access to learning that matters to all students, particularly those with the most barriers to academic and economic success.

The New Administration Should:

- ▶ **Leverage ESSA implementation to support states and school districts** working to implement student-centered, personalized learning environments with a focus on deeper learning skills. Policies can encourage student-centered learning by providing technical assistance to states and school districts to train educators to teach a broader set of competencies, explore innovative new assessment tools, and make deeper learning experiences available to all students.

STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE

As the nation continues to turn away from standardized, one-size-fits-all approaches to education, educators and policymakers are seeking methods for more personalized forms of instruction. The Students at the Center initiative at Jobs for the Future has launched a research collaborative to build, define, apply, and share a robust evidence base for student-centered learning. The Student-Centered Learning Research Collaborative brings together scholars, school leaders, policymakers, practitioners, and funders to work in partnership to investigate and evaluate what we know about student-centered learning both in and beyond today's schools. By bridging gaps between research, practice, and policy, we can leverage knowledge about what works to effect meaningful change at scale, especially for our most marginalized and underrepresented students.

- ▶ **Support a robust education research and development agenda** through the Institute of Education Sciences and other relevant program offices, keeping research relevant to the day-to-day functioning of classrooms and widely disseminating new research insights and evidence-based best practices.
- ▶ **Invest in better measurement tools** designed to assess a wider range of competencies and employability skills for all learners, with input from key stakeholders.

8. Alternative Routes to Credentials.

Too often, traditional financial aid and higher education programs do not adequately support the needs of students who are older, returning to school, seeking skills and credentials for work, have no experience in postsecondary education, or who cannot afford (time-wise, financially, or geographically) to engage in a traditional college setting. Across the country, new innovative education models are leveraging technology, and competency-based pathways to credentials are emerging to open doors for nontraditional students, accelerating the time it takes to achieve industry-recognized, postsecondary credentials.

Students often cannot access financial aid for these innovative programs due to program eligibility requirements that are based on seat time and credit hours, or grounded in outdated ideas about what a college should look like. Allowing access to federal financial aid for innovative, nontraditional postsecondary programs in high-growth and high-demand fields should be explored, tested, and expanded with a strong focus on outcomes and results.

The New Administration Should:

- ▶ **Expand current experimental site authority focused on competency-based education** through accelerated, responsible experimentation with a strong focus on defining standards of success, equity, and evaluation to prove return on investment.
- ▶ **Expand current experimental site authority to test various forms of short-term credentials and badging** by testing quality assurances, determining labor market outcomes, and assessing impact on credit accumulation toward further credentials for such programs.
- ▶ **Encourage statewide and cross-state transfer and articulation policies** that make credentialing more streamlined and portable within and across state systems.

► **Establish a specialized accreditation entity** with responsibility for quality assurance and accreditation of competency-based education programs and short-term, industry-recognized credentials, as well as informing approaches and policies related to credentials across state and federal government agencies and efforts.

Our nation’s systems of education and workforce have operated independently for too long, at a disservice to our students and workers. In this section, we address the interrelated nature of learning and work, offering suggestions for how the world of work can inform and enrich our educational institutions.

9. Real Data to Inform Real Choices.

For many Americans, the postsecondary institution and program they choose to enroll in is one of the most important financial decisions they will ever make, impacting their future career prospects, earnings, and educational debt. And yet scant information is available to help consumers make smart investments in their education. Prospective students choose a postsecondary education path without full and clear information on the education and labor market outcomes they can expect to achieve. At the same time, taxpayer dollars flow to postsecondary institutions with little accountability for results. Instead, federal policy should enable data systems that link students’ aggregate postsecondary education and workforce outcomes, make data clearly understandable and accessible to current and prospective students, and lay the groundwork for future consideration of student outcomes in making financial aid and accreditation decisions.

The New Administration Should:

► **Create a data system that ensures students have access to information** by institution and program on rates of remedial enrollment, credit accumulation, and graduation; costs of the program and debt accumulated; and post-graduation employment and average annual earnings. These data need to be made accessible while protecting student privacy.

► **Require institutions of higher education to report on student outcomes** by institution and program, making information available to prospective students, current students, employers, and other consumers in an understandable fashion for informed decision making.

► **Build capacity of education and workforce counselors at all levels**—including high school, college, workforce, and TANF—on use of student outcomes data for helping prospective students to make informed decisions about their best path to a career.

IV. Connecting Education to Workforce Success

10. Connect Learning to Work.

Work-based learning provides students with real work experiences and employability skills needed for career and economic success. From employers’ perspectives, expanding work-based learning opportunities will better prepare students with the skills needed for high-demand industries and occupations. While the benefits of work-based learning are clear, these experiences are available primarily to the most highly educated and socially connected students. To put more Americans on pathways to good jobs, it is essential to expand access to work-based learning, pre-apprenticeships, and apprenticeships to the populations for whom these experiences can mean the most: low-income students, out-of-school youth, and low-skilled jobseekers and incumbent workers. To the extent possible, work-based learning should be integrated with academic coursework, with contextualized learning taking place in the classroom to provide all students with career-relevant work experience and opportunities to build networks of social capital in high school, programs for out-of-school youth, and adult and postsecondary education programs.

The New Administration Should:

- ▶ **Update the federal work-study program** to reach students who can benefit the most from the opportunities it provides, improve linkages to career-relevant work experiences, and encourage off-campus job placements with local employers.
- ▶ **Support the expansion of pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities** in high-growth fields and occupations, especially for underserved communities.

PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY

Almost half of all Americans reach their mid-20s without the skills or labor market credentials essential for success in today's economy. In 2012, Jobs for the Future and the Harvard Graduate School of Education, in collaboration with states and regions, launched the Pathways to Prosperity Network to envision how our education system—from K-12 through college—partners with employers and prepares our young people for success. The Pathways to Prosperity Network seeks to ensure that many more youth complete high school, attain postsecondary credentials with currency in the labor market, and launch careers while leaving open the prospect of further education. Key stakeholders from education, business, and government lead the work in each Network state and region, with the long-term goal of creating widely adopted systems of rigorous, relevant, and engaging grade 9-14+ college and career pathways. Pathways focus on high-growth, high-demand, high-wage sectors of the economy, including STEM fields such as information technology, health care, and advanced manufacturing. These pathways create new opportunities for young people, provide employers with a talent pipeline of young professionals, and strengthen state and regional economies.

- ▶ **Increase apprenticeship opportunities for diverse and underrepresented populations**, including women, people of color, disconnected or opportunity youth, and others.
- ▶ **Engage employers in the design and delivery of work-based learning and training systems**, including in the development of high-demand, sector-focused strategies and programs.
- ▶ **Encourage the use of intermediary organizations** to translate among educators, employers, and workforce professionals; to identify incentives for employer participation; and to provide the infrastructure that makes collaboration and scaling possible.
- ▶ **Expand work-based learning opportunities** across the federal workforce, education, and training programs by leveraging implementation of new and existing legislation
- ▶ **Create an Office of Work-Based Learning** to coordinate federal efforts across agencies and programs.
- ▶ **Reform unemployment insurance** to focus on getting people back to work by more quickly connecting workers to workforce development services; linking retraining to skills gaps; promoting acceleration strategies; encouraging innovations like wage insurance, work-sharing, and part-time UI; and rethinking the financing and solvency of the UI system.

Conclusion

JFF looks forward to working with the Trump administration and Congress over the next four years to advance our shared priorities of ensuring that all youth and adults, especially those who are struggling or who reside in distressed communities, have the skills and credentials needed to succeed in our economy. Through our decades of work in communities and with states across the country, we have identified evidence-based, scalable strategies to put more Americans on pathways to a family-supporting career. We appreciate the opportunity to update you and your incoming Administration on some of these strategies and related policy ideas through these recommendations and are pleased to continue to offer our expertise in the months ahead.

For more information, please contact Mary Gardner Clagett, Director, National Workforce Policy, mclagett@jff.org, or Lexi Barrett, Director, National Education Policy, lbarrett@jff.org.

