

# Postsecondary CTE

## State Policy Landscape

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## Background

[Postsecondary career and technical education](#), commonly known as CTE, is a broad term that encompasses academics, technical skills and on-the-job training to prepare students to enter the workforce upon completion of a program. States support postsecondary CTE primarily through their local community and technical college systems, as well as workforce development programs such as apprenticeships and externships. States also provide students and families with information and resources related to career pathways in postsecondary CTE programs, which often build on similar programs at the high school level and can involve dual credit, dual enrollment or apprenticeships.

### POSTSECONDARY CTE DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2020-21, [3.5 million](#) students were enrolled in postsecondary CTE programs. More women were enrolled in postsecondary programs than men, a reverse from K-12 CTE programs, which skew toward male participants. Postsecondary CTE students also [are more likely](#) to be first-generation college students who have children and are working while enrolled in their education programs.

Postsecondary CTE programs are often important drivers for economic growth and are critical to meeting workforce shortages. The programs can offer stackable credentials for [in-demand](#) jobs in IT, skilled trades, manufacturing and customer service professions. These [middle-skill jobs](#) provide workers with wage gains and pathways to increasing lifetime earning potential.

## Did You Know?



Nationwide, there are more than **8,000** short-term postsecondary CTE programs across 26 fields of study.



The number of associate degrees issued increased **17%** between 2010–2020.

## SHORT-TERM POSTSECONDARY CTE

Postsecondary CTE programs include both short-term offerings, including certificates, certifications and other [nondegree credentials](#), as well as longer programs that lead to an associate degree. The [Urban Institute](#) identified more than 8,000 short-term postsecondary CTE programs nationwide, with six main fields of study including health sciences, business and marketing, personal and culinary services, repair, protective services, and computer/information sciences. The same report shows that short-term postsecondary CTE programs produce median earnings of \$32,000 two years after graduation, although earnings vary by program with health sciences and computer/information sciences providing the highest wages. The median debt for short-term postsecondary CTE credentials is \$16,077.

## LONG-TERM POSTSECONDARY CTE

Longer-term postsecondary CTE includes associate degree programs. In the [2019-20 academic year](#), postsecondary institutions conferred over 1 million associate degrees, an increase of 17% compared to a decade prior. Of these degrees, just 17% were in health professions and 5% were in engineering or manufacturing technologies. A [2022 study from Lightcast](#) found that associate degrees in technical fields such as engineering, health and computer/information sciences provide more upward mobility for adult learners than some bachelor's degrees. Overall, learners with an associate degree earn an average of **\$8,000** more per year than students with only a high school diploma.

## State Policy Action

### WORKFORCE READINESS PROGRAMS



**Hawaii HB 1561** (2020): Establishes within the department of education a workforce readiness program to provide opportunities for students to earn associate degrees, workforce development diplomas, pre-apprenticeship certificates and other industry-recognized certificates; requires the department to designate schools, including adult community schools, to participate in the program.



**Maryland SB 515** (2019): Establishes the Workforce Readiness Grant program to provide matching grants to community colleges to improve technology for workforce education programs.



**Oregon SB 1545** (2022): Establishes grant programs in the Higher Education Coordinating Commission to increase access for priority populations to training opportunities in construction, health care and manufacturing and to workforce development services and benefits.



## FUNDING



**Florida HB 1507** (2021): Provides grants to school districts' postsecondary technical centers and Florida College System institutions to cover up to two-thirds of the cost of short-term, high-demand programs for eligible students upon successful completion and award of a credential of value. Funded with **\$15 million** appropriation in 2022-23.



**Kansas HB 2510** (2022): Appropriates \$8.5 million in grant funding to six technical and community colleges provided there is a dollar-for-dollar match in non-state funding or donated equipment from a private industry partner.



**New Jersey AB 4224** (2022): Appropriates \$19.9 million to six county and community colleges to provide career and technical education grants.



**Wyoming SF 122** (2019): Creates the Wyoming Works Program to support community college technical programs to meet labor and economic development needs; **includes** a \$2 million appropriation to support CTE program development for community colleges and \$3 million for individual grants to students.

## ALIGNMENT WITH K-12 CTE PROGRAMS



**Louisiana SB 216** (2022): Requires postsecondary institutions to work with the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and public schools to align curricula and create guaranteed transfer and articulation pathways for courses, including career and technical education programs.



**Mississippi HB 1388** (2022): Requires the workforce development office, subject to appropriation by the Legislature, to pilot a career coaching program to connect middle school and high school students to career avenues within and beyond the classroom setting; requires the state department of education to work with the state community college board to ensure alignment of career and technical education courses across the public school and community college systems.

## FINANCIAL AID AND STUDENT SUPPORTS



**Delaware HB 480** (2020): Creates the Career-Based Scholarship Program provides a \$5,000 annual award for eligible students enrolled in a degree program leading to a high-needs field, as identified by the Delaware Higher Education Office and the state Department of Labor. Current high-needs fields **include** accounting, business, computer engineering and science, finance, human resources, information technology, management, nursing, and operations management.



**South Carolina HB 3144** (2022): Creates the Workforce Industry Needs Scholarship, covering tuition, fees and course materials for students pursuing a professional certificate, credential or degree from a state technical college. Awards are limited to \$5,000 per year, for up to three years, and must be applied after other federal and state scholarship aid.



**Michigan SB 268** (2020): Creates the Michigan Reconnect Grant, which provides financial aid for residents seeking associate degrees or industry-recognized credentials from certain educational jobs and training programs; defines a credential as a certificate or credential that is portable and is sought or accepted by multiple employers within an industry for purposes of recruitment, hiring or promotion.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [NCSL Postsecondary CTE Webpage](#)
- [CTE In Your State – Advance CTE](#)

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