WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §18-2E-11

§18-2E-11. Advanced Career Education.

(a) The Legislature hereby makes the following findings:

(1) Preparing West Virginia students to achieve post-secondary career education and to excel in the workforce is a responsibility shared among all state education agencies and institutions. The state's education agencies and institutions can fulfill this responsibility by establishing partnerships that enable students to attain advanced career education and valuable workforce skills in a more efficient and advantageous manner;

(2) The formation of partnerships between public secondary schools and community and technical colleges or public or not-for-profit private baccalaureate institutions which establish advanced career education programs would ensure that a full range of community and technical college programs and services are provided in all areas of the state;

(3) Programs which create clear and efficient pathways that begin during secondary education and lead to obtaining advanced certifications and associate degrees will increase the number of students that ultimately obtain a post-secondary credential or degree; and

(4) West Virginia's economic prosperity is directly tied to the level and quality of its workforce career education. Providing the students of this state with increased access to career education will not only improve the general well-being of its citizens, but greatly enhance the economic prosperity of the state.

(b) The purpose of this section and the Advanced Career Education (ACE) programs authorized herein is to connect secondary schools with community and technical colleges or public or not-for-profit private baccalaureate institutions that provide associate degrees to accomplish the following:

(1) Prepare secondary students for success in post-secondary education and the workforce; and

(2) Provide more opportunities for secondary students to earn post-secondary college credits, certifications, and associate degrees.

(c) To effectuate the purposes set forth in §18-2E-11(b) of this code, community and technical colleges, public or not-for-profit private baccalaureate institutions, career technical education centers, and county boards of education, or any combination of such secondary and postsecondary entities, shall establish partnerships that provide for ACE programs which feature defined pathways that begin when a student is in secondary education and that ultimately lead to advanced certifications or associate degrees awarded by community and technical colleges or baccalaureate institutions. ACE programs shall be equally available

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to public, nonpublic, and homeschool students.

(d) ACE programs shall include pathways that consist of a curriculum of courses leading to advanced certifications or an associate degree that have been deemed to satisfy a workforce need as determined by the Department of Commerce.

(1) The Department of Commerce shall, on occasion, but at least annually, provide written notification to the State Board of Education, the West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education and the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission of a determination of areas of workforce need within the state.

(2) The Department of Commerce, in consultation with the council, the commission, and business partners, shall develop a hierarchy of high demand skilled professions and workforce needs with shortages, which shall be given priority in administration of the program.

(e) The State Superintendent of Schools, the Chancellor of the Council for Community and Technical College Education, and the Chancellor of the Higher Education Policy Commission, or their designees, shall facilitate the ACE programs. At a minimum, an ACE program shall satisfy the following objectives:

(1) Provide additional opportunities to students in this state to attain advanced certifications and college credentials leading to associate degrees through ACE pathways;

(2) Increase the number of students in this state that attain advanced certifications and college credentials leading to associate degrees through ACE pathways;

(3) Allow students in this state to attain advanced certifications and college credentials leading to associate degrees through ACE pathways at little or no cost;

(4) Ensure that ACE pathways provide a clear roadmap to the courses and requirements necessary to attain advanced certifications and college credentials leading to associate degrees; and

(5) Ensure that course requirements within ACE pathways are not duplicated.

(f) The board and council shall jointly promulgate guidelines for the administration of ACE programs and pathways, which must be affirmatively adopted by the board and the council. At a minimum, such guidelines shall provide for the following:

(1) That ACE program partnerships established between community and technical colleges, public or not-for-profit private baccalaureate institutions, career technical education centers, and county boards of education, or any combination of such secondary and postsecondary entities, shall be reduced to written partnership agreements;

(2) The information required to be contained within partnership agreements;

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(3) That ACE programs and pathways shall meet the requirements of the accrediting entity for the community and technical college or public or not-for-profit private baccalaureate institution awarding the associate degrees or advanced certificates;

(4) That partnership agreements shall be approved by the State Superintendent of Schools, the Chancellor for the Council for Community and Technical College Education and the Chancellor of the Higher Education Policy Commission; and

(5) Any other provisions necessary to effectuate the purposes of this section.

(g) The board and the council shall maintain and annually report to the Governor and the Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability the following information about ACE programs:

(1) The identity and number of partnership agreements;

(2) The ACE programs and pathways that are being utilized by career technical education centers, county boards of education, community and technical colleges, and public or not-for-profit private baccalaureate institutions; and

(3) The nature and number of degrees and certifications awarded to students participating in ACE programs by each community and technical college, public or not-for-profit private baccalaureate institution and career technical education center.

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