

Seamless Education for Alaskans

A statement of the **Vocational Technical Education Providers**

December 2003

The Commonwealth North study, Alaska's Jobs for Alaska's People, states that Alaska's education system is fragmented and needs to be aligned, and it points out the need for an efficient and responsive education and training system to place Alaskans in high-demand high-wage jobs. The VTEP supports the vision of an aligned education and training system. In fact, the VTEP's first report is titled, Building a Statewide System, and it intends to be part of the solution.

Both the Alaska Workforce Investment Board and the VTEP have endorsed the utilization of industry recognized skill standards in Career and Technical Education. In an aligned system, a person should not have to go backwards and repeat in order to further their education. If a person has attained a skill standard at one institution, it should be recognized at another, and should become the starting place from which further training occurs. The same argument holds for courses with academic content standards. This articulation can be attained through a variety of concurrent and transfer credit mechanisms, and through alignment of programs by educational and training organizations.

Alignment also means leveraging resources so that partnerships can provide opportunities for learners that single entities cannot, and resources are not wasted through duplication.

A few examples from among many of alignment of systems currently occurring within Alaska are:

- At the Delta Mine Training Center, courses are taught jointly to high school students and adults. Through agreements the center has with the Tanana Valley Campus of UAF and the Delta/Greely School District, the high school students receive both high school and university credit, and the adults receive university credit.
- The Sitka Education Consortium facilitates cooperative arrangements such as the welding class which jointly instructs adult students from the UAS Sitka Campus and Mt. Edgecumbe and Sitka High School students, with the latter two receiving the option of concurrent credit.
- The undergraduate general education requirements within the UA system have been aligned so that a course meeting a requirement at any of the main administrative units of UA is recognized throughout the system.
- The leveraging of resources via partnership is evident in AVTEC's partnership with the Bering Straits School District and the GCI corporation to develop and deliver an algebra course via videoconferencing and the Internet that is cooperatively taught by AVTEC and BSSD instructors. A similar partnership with AVTEC, the Bristol Bay Native Association, the Southwest Alaska Vocational Education Center, and others allowed for delivery of an IT course to Bristol Bay region village residents.
- UAA is offering concurrent credit for Spring Creek Correctional Center courses in the fields of culinary arts and computer applications.

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A Seamless Education system means, as in the examples above, that we maximize resources for the benefit of providing greater opportunities for learners. It recognizes that learning is a life-long process where individuals exit and reenter the system repeatedly. It develops the means to allow learners to continue forward with their education smoothly and without having to repeat standards-based learning they have already accomplished. The VTEP Memorandum of Understanding represents a common ground from which to pursue these ends.

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Principles of Tech Prep

a part of
Seamless Education

endorsed by
Vocational Technical Education Providers

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Background: Tech Prep originated in the 1980s as an attempt both to improve the quality of career and technical education (CTE) and to facilitate the transition of students to postsecondary education. It emphasizes integrating academics and technical education, linking secondary and postsecondary programs, and achieving a smooth transition from secondary to postsecondary in CTE career fields. The 1990 Carl Perkins Act incorporated Tech Prep and continues to fund it through the current Perkins III legislation.

Purpose: The purpose of Tech Prep is to provide a smooth transition between secondary and postsecondary education/training programs by linking secondary and postsecondary programs into a coherent sequence of nonduplicative courses that lead to an industry recognized credential, certificate, degree or apprenticeship. A second purpose of Tech Prep is to improve the quality of Career Technical Education through:

- integrating academic and technical studies designed to prepare students for postsecondary studies;
- offering courses that are part of a coherent sequence in a career field;
- offering standards based courses; and
- providing contextual and integrated learning that allows students to see how their education is applied in the world of work.

Tools:

1. Consortia
Tech Prep programs ideally operate under a Consortium comprised of the partnership institutions and the businesses or industries of the program's career fields. The Consortium develops an agreement concerning the relationship of its members and the oversight of the program. Industry participation ensures maintaining up to date standards in the coursework, provides opportunities for Work Based Learning experiences, and strengthens community support for the program.
2. Articulation Agreements
Articulation agreements are written agreements between secondary and postsecondary education/training providers that delineate a program's nonduplicative and coherent sequential course of study that lead a student to a credential, certificate, degree, and/or apprenticeship. Agreed upon outcomes and

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assessments assure legitimacy of the agreement. They also delineate the conditions and terms for the awarding of concurrent and/or transfer credits.

3. Concurrent Credit

When a secondary and postsecondary course meet the same standards, the nonduplicative imperative of Tech Prep encourages offering a student concurrent credit for the course. Offering concurrent credit requires a written agreement between the two institutions and the periodic joint review of the standards being met. Concurrent credit ideally should be awarded upon successful course completion indicating that the standards have been achieved; it is less desirable to make it conditional upon subsequent actions or achievements.

Tech Prep and Dual Credit Terms

1. Definition of Tech Prep adopted by UA Programs

(developed by a committee of urban and rural post-secondary and secondary educators, government, and business representatives)

The Tech Prep Program is a partnership between University of Alaska (UA), secondary school districts, and other partnership institutions. It is a program that recognizes technical and related academic preparation and, where possible, work-based learning in a specific career field. It partners secondary education, post-secondary education, labor and business in a sequential course of study without duplication of coursework that will lead a student to a certificate, credential, apprenticeship, associate degree or baccalaureate degree.

2. Federal Definition of Tech Prep

Section 202(a)(3) of Perkins III states that a “Tech Prep program” means a program of study that:

- combines at a minimum 2 years of secondary education (as determined under State law) with a minimum of 2 years of postsecondary education in a nonduplicative, sequential course of study;
- integrates academic, and vocational and technical, instruction, and utilize work-based and worksite learning where appropriate and available;
- provides technical preparation in a career field such as engineering technology, applied science, a mechanical, industrial, or practical art or trade, agriculture, health occupations, business, or applied economics;
- builds student competence in mathematics, science, reading, writing, communications, economics, and workplace skills through applied, contextual academics, and integrated instruction, in a coherent sequence of courses;
- leads to an associate or a baccalaureate degree or a postsecondary certificate in a specific career field; and
- leads to placement in appropriate employment or to further education.

Note: This definition must be used by institutions receiving Perkins III funding when reporting Tech Prep students to the state.

3. Articulation: An agreement to work together to develop seamless transitions for students.

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4. Federal definition of Articulation: “The term “articulation agreement” means a written commitment to a program designed to provide students with a non-duplicative sequence of progressive achievement leading to degrees or certificates in a Tech Prep education program.” (Perkins III, Section 202 (a)(1))
5. Registered (postsecondary): Students enrolled in a class by completing a registration form.
6. Admitted (postsecondary): Students enrolled in a program to earn a certificate or degree by completing an application for admission and being accepted.
7. Enrolled (postsecondary): Same as admitted. Can also refer to taking classes (see registered).
8. Direct Credit: Term is not used by postsecondary registrars. Has been used in the state to indicate that a secondary student receives credit for a course at the time of course completion, instead of at a later time contingent on full time postsecondary enrollment.
9. Concurrent Credit:

A student receives credit from two (or more) institutions for successful completion of a single course.

- a. This may or may not be part of a Tech Prep program. An example that is not Tech Prep is a stand-alone academic course delivered at the secondary school as an advanced placement or brokered course.
 - b. Tech Prep concurrent credit: requires a written standards-based agreement between the secondary school and the postsecondary institution and the course must be part of a sequence of study leading to a credential, certificate, degree and/or apprenticeship in a career area.
 - c. Postsecondary concurrent credit. A postsecondary institution grants credit for a course taken at another postsecondary or adult education institution or agency through a written agreement between the two institutions.
10. Dual credit: Student receives credit from more than one agency or institution for a single course. This is an ordinary language term. It refers to concurrent credit, but also can apply to transfer credits. Specific ways of obtaining dual credit are listed below.

Types of delivery for dual credit:

- a. Student receives postsecondary credit for a course taught at the secondary institution under an articulation agreement between the secondary and postsecondary institution.
- b. Postsecondary instructor is paid by a secondary institution to deliver a postsecondary course to secondary students.
- c. Students register and attend a postsecondary course for which the secondary institution also gives credit.

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- d. Labor union training programs recognize the work done in a secondary program and give advanced apprenticeship standing to the students who complete the program (school to apprenticeship model).
 - e. Labor union training programs provide training for which secondary schools grant credit.
 - f. Secondary and postsecondary institution both give credit for a course taught by a third agency.
 - g. Student receives postsecondary credit for courses taught by another agency or institution, such as an adult basic education provider or an adult correctional facility.
 - h. Student receives postsecondary credit for training provided by another training agency, such as a labor union.
 - i. Transfer credit for prior experience.
 - j. Advanced Placement. A program sponsored by The College Board to offer college level courses at the secondary school.
11. Brokered course: One institution pays another institution to deliver a course to its students. Can be accompanied by a dual credit arrangement.
12. Co-sponsored course: A process through which an institution offers a course whose costs and/or facilities are underwritten or provided by another group, such as a business or industry partner. Can be accompanied by a dual credit arrangement.
13. Work Based Learning: Work based learning refers to learning that results from work experience that is planned to contribute to the intellectual and career development of students. The work experience is supplemented with instruction and activities that apply, reinforce, refine, or extend the learning that occurs during work, so that students develop attitudes, knowledge, skills, and habits that might not develop from work experience alone. For a glossary of terms related to Work Based Learning, see the Work Based Learning Manual at: <http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/CTE/workbase.html>
14. School to Apprenticeship: A cooperative education program for secondary students that integrates academic and occupational instruction, includes a paid work experience, and leads to entrance into a registered apprenticeship program. After graduation, participants become full time apprentices and have already completed a number of the requirements.