

## Career Clusters help prepare workforce

You will begin to notice WITC information organized by career clusters and pathways. The catalog and cluster brochures will be the first documents to incorporate this format. Using Career Clusters and Pathways creates a



similar organizing structure for secondary, postsecondary, state government, and employers to facilitate transition between educational organizations and into employment. The Wisconsin Technical College System

has identified a cluster and pathway for each program in the 16 technical colleges.

Career Clusters is a national initiative intended to help organize programs and guidance activities around clusters of similar occupations. The 16-cluster format used by the U.S.



Department of Education encompasses more than 970 occupations identified by O\*net and the SOC codes. Each cluster is divided into two to seven pathways that further defines career areas. By adopting this cluster philosophy, schools expand their content and offerings to better prepare learners for their futures.



Career Clusters has three major objectives. The first is to increase learner awareness of career options so that they may make better informed decisions. It is also the

goal to increase learner understanding of the structure and function of businesses so they can be more productive, value-added employees. The third desire is to increase learner achievement by setting high standards of expectations and by teaching academics in a context



that interests the learners. Details, examples, and resources are available on the Web at [www.career-clusters.org](http://www.career-clusters.org).

Career Clusters provide for curriculum integration and contextual learning opportunities that reflect the career goals and interests of all learners. This relevancy creates the motivation for many learners to stay in school longer and enroll in more challenging courses. Career Clusters identify the knowledge and skills, both academic and technical, for a broad career cluster that will allow all learners to pursue a wide range of career opportunities from entry level through management and professional levels.



Perkins IV legislation is a motivator for high schools to develop Career Cluster Programs of Study. Programs of Study are tools that help educators and students build the con-

nections from secondary to postsecondary to work. The development includes reviewing potential availability of careers, potential earning power, and the development of a series of courses to acquire various careers. The benefits for students to be able to see how their high school courses connect to a specific career is a valuable tool. Giving students the skills and knowledge to access available resources to alter their plan as their career goals change is even more valuable.

WITC has created Program of Study templates for all associate degree and technical diploma programs to help facilitate the process for high schools. The templates are available at [www.witc.edu/counselors/pathways](http://www.witc.edu/counselors/pathways). As articulation agreements are developed with individual high schools, WITC will highlight the courses in the Programs of Study and post them to [www.witc.edu/high-school/advanced.htm](http://www.witc.edu/high-school/advanced.htm) to be used as a resource.