

# MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

## INTRODUCTION

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) oversees career and technical education programs, including 444 comprehensive high schools and 57 area career centers across the state. The Skilled Technical Sciences section provides technical assistance to local school personnel in successful delivery of programs to ensure students are prepared for further training and/or the workforce.

On his first day on the job, Dr. Oscar Carter, director of Skilled Technical Sciences at DESE, began to push for career and technical education (CTE) programs that offer industry-recognized credentials. In response to the opportunities for federal government support, he was especially interested in creating registered apprenticeships at the school level throughout the state.

## DEVELOPING PROGRAMS

Through his research, Carter learned that federal labor law allows 16- and 17-year-olds to participate in registered apprenticeships as long as they are mentored one-on-one. In addition, he discovered schools can be intermediaries with the Department of Labor and apply for a registered apprenticeship allowing area career centers to create their own programs. Dr. Carter initially wanted to learn more about registered apprenticeships in Missouri at the adult level, so they could be adapted for students at career centers throughout the state. He started by contacting Neil Perry, the Missouri State Director, U.S. Department of Labor/Office of Apprenticeship, to learn more about state apprenticeship programs. "Raising program rigor and relevance through a registered apprenticeship is an important step," said Dr. Carter. "Our current industry partners didn't blink an eye at getting 16-year-old students started with one-on-one mentoring, because they know that their future depends on keeping kids in the community and growing them within their organizations."

A pilot program was developed with Lebanon Technology & Career Center, and now 8 of 57 career centers in Missouri have apprenticeship programs in development. The apprenticeship model began with area career centers, as they are shared-time centers and serve a number of school districts. Carter also worked to get multiple industry partners involved with each career center to increase program flexibility, maintain longevity and insulate the program from economic variables. He believes this same model could also be successful at high schools if there is employer support.

In addition to registered apprenticeships, Dr. Carter continues to champion skilled technical programs in various ways. One focus has been to encourage schools to obtain business accreditations wherever possible. DESE offers program development assistance in multiple ways, the most significant of which is 50/50 program funding. In the first year of the process, programs can apply to have 50 percent of the accreditation cost reimbursed by the state from grant funds. Another important aspect in developing these programs has been working with secondary and postsecondary institutions on collaboration in creating articulation agreements and setting up dual enrollment programs. DESE created a 10 Step Process for Development and Implementation of Programs of Study to assist secondary and postsecondary institutions in creating smooth transitions for selected career pathways. In addition, dual enrollment programs have gained popularity. “We’re seeing students earn 6 credits per year in their junior and senior years,” says Dr. Carter. “In some cases there are students graduating with an associate degree.” Developing articulation agreements and dual enrollment programs with postsecondary institutions was initially complex, but it was simplified once the value of a career pathway was made apparent to everyone involved.

### CONNECTING WITH INDUSTRY

DESE’s partnerships with industry initially started with state sheet metal and carpentry unions and have since expanded to include Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc. Heart of America Chapter (ABC HOA). Dr. Carter credits Sara Flaherty-Lee, Vice President of Education at ABC HOA’s efforts with doing the lion’s share of the work to make industry-education partnerships a reality.

Bill Underwood, the NCCER Executive Director for Pearson Education, facilitated Dr. Carter’s introduction to Flaherty-Lee in 2015. Flaherty-Lee described the creation of the partnership as a mutual process of understanding, where a single point of contact through DESE made it easier to establish new registered apprenticeships in the state. In the early stages of their partnership, both DESE and ABC HOA agreed to align their credential processes to ensure that the credentials received by students were industry recognized. The NCCER program provided exactly what they needed to ensure the students were provided with consistent training resulting in credentials. Once this was accomplished, Flaherty-Lee worked to get ABC HOA members involved with the registered apprenticeship programs. The statewide shortage of qualified craft professionals was a significant motivator for ABC HOA contractor members to get involved with training students. Flaherty-Lee believes persistence and follow up were key elements to their success in the partnership. She stated, “Aggressive involvement was very important to ensure that everyone stayed on the same page.”

## MAINTAINING MOMENTUM

Using NCCER's accreditation process and curriculum helped DESE's career centers comply with registered apprenticeship requirements. NCCER accreditation makes it easier for programs to fulfill DESE's performance standards, titled the CTE Common Criteria and Quality Indicator Guidelines (Common Criteria). DESE's Common Criteria require that CTE programs have programs of study, curriculum, instruction, assessment, career and technical student organizations and program management and planning. These criteria, along with supporting quality indicators are designed to provide guidance and direction to local school districts in establishing, maintaining and evaluating CTE programs.

## SUMMARY

NCCER and its Construction Career Pathways initiative were two of the primary resources available to DESE at the beginning of its process. Dr. Carter stressed the importance of timing and action in the journey to creating partnerships. It was also vital to reach out to contacts and ask what options were available. The state needed to be receptive to the process; legislation, education and industry had to have the proper foundation in place to create a framework for registered apprenticeship programs.

Ultimately, there is no right answer to building partnerships. Dr. Carter hopes to even the playing field in Missouri by ensuring that everyone can participate. At the state level, directors must be open to the different avenues available for student success.