

# Executive Summary

## Valuing Both Cs in College- and Career-Readiness Accountability Systems

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**As workplace requirements continue to rise, more jobs will require individuals to possess advanced credentials and degrees and the broad mix of academic, technical and workplace skills employers prefer.** Our nation's economic growth and security rest on our ability to close critical credential attainment and skills gaps and prepare more students for success after high school. Although all state accountability systems address college readiness, less attention has been paid to career readiness or the need to help more students graduate both college- and career-ready.

As SREB's *Credentials for All* (2015) report describes, **high-quality career pathway programs offer a different approach to learning** — one in which students apply academic knowledge, hands-on technical know-how and teamwork skills to solve real-world problems. Career pathways also allow students to earn college credits while they explore the world of work. American parents overwhelmingly want their children to have these kinds of educational experiences, according to Phi Delta Kappa's 2017 national poll.

Career pathways equip young people with the lifelong learning skills they need to earn credentials and degrees, secure good jobs and sustain a middle-class life.

### Building Accountability Systems That Value Career Readiness

**SREB has long advocated that states set a goal that 80 percent or more of students will graduate college-ready, career-ready or both.** To meet this bold goal, state accountability systems must include simple, straightforward indicators that send a clear message to district and school leaders that college readiness and career readiness are being equally valued and that greater value will be placed on students who graduate ready for both college *and* careers. States can also invest in career pathways in high-wage, high-demand fields, as Delaware has done. **We urge states to:**

- Establish definitions of **college readiness** and **academic and technical career readiness** in policy (to learn how, visit [sreb.org/cte-commission](http://sreb.org/cte-commission)).
- Set **long-term student achievement and credential attainment goals** and measure growth toward those goals annually and over time.
- **Equally value college readiness and career readiness.**
- Award **extra weight** for each student who:
  - Demonstrates both college readiness *and* career readiness.
  - Completes a four-course career pathway sequence in a high-wage, high-demand industry and earns a passing score on approved end-of-course exams or industry certification exams in those courses.
  - Completes a four-course sequence of Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate or Advanced Career courses (to learn more, visit [sreb.org/ac](http://sreb.org/ac)) in broad STEM fields and scores at the proficient level or above on approved end-of-course exams in those courses.
  - Earns a college- and career-readiness diploma endorsement for completing a college-ready academic core curriculum and a career pathway program of study.
  - Earns a significant number of credits toward a credential or degree in a high-wage, high-demand industry or STEM field.
- Use **earmarked funds and bonus points** to incentivize districts and schools to work with two- and four-year postsecondary institutions and employers to develop pathways in high-wage, high-demand fields that:
  - Span grades nine through 14, at minimum.
  - Offer opportunities for students to participate in work-based learning.
  - Redesign the senior year to allow college-ready students to earn up to 30 college credits before graduating.

**We encourage you to read the full version of *Valuing Both Cs in College- and Career-Readiness Accountability Systems*,** available for download from [sreb.org/ValuingBothCs](http://sreb.org/ValuingBothCs). To learn more about how SREB can help you prepare more students for a double purpose — college *and* careers, email [Gene.Bottoms@sreb.org](mailto:Gene.Bottoms@sreb.org) or call (404) 879-5529.