



School Districts and Florida College System Institutions Frequently Change Their Career Education Programs

at a glance

Florida's school districts and the 28 institutions in the Florida College System provide public postsecondary career education programs. Since industry and business needs can change rapidly, it is important for educational institutions to regularly realign their program offerings to match these needs.

School districts and Florida College System institutions made fairly frequent changes to their career education program offerings between 2002 and 2009. Most institutions have increased the frequency of these changes in recent years, particularly in the health science and information technology fields.

Scope

As directed by the Florida Legislature, this report is part of a series on Florida's career education programs. This report examines how often school districts and colleges change their career education program offerings.¹

¹ *Public Career Education Programs Differ From Private Programs on Their Admission Requirements, Costs, Financial Aid Availability, and Student Outcomes*, OPPAGA [Report No. 10-18](#), January 2010; *Funding Model for Career and Adult Education Is Reasonable but Needs Some Improvements*, OPPAGA [Report No. 10-24](#), February 2010; *Florida Should Not Use the Targeted Occupations Lists as the Sole Criteria to Fund Career Education Programs*, OPPAGA [Report No. 10-26](#), March 2010.

Background

Florida's school districts and the 28 institutions in the Florida College System provide a range of public postsecondary career education programs. These programs provide opportunities for adults to train for jobs that will help them achieve economic self-sufficiency and help ensure that Florida's employers have access to skilled workers needed to compete in the global economy.

Career education programs offer training for occupations that require more than a high school degree but less than a four-year degree. The programs can be as short as two weeks and as long as two and a half years in length. Students who complete the programs may earn college degrees and certificates, vocational credit certificates and diplomas, apprenticeships, and continuing workforce education credits. In 2007-08, districts and colleges served approximately 180,000 students who were enrolled in 548 different career education programs.

Findings

To identify how often school districts and institutions in the Florida College System modify their career education programs, we analyzed student level enrollment data from the Florida Department of Education for the period 2002-03 to 2007-08 (data for 2008-09 was not available at the time of our analysis). We also surveyed school districts and colleges to identify specific changes made to their career education

program offerings during this period, including program additions, expansions, reductions, and discontinuations.

School districts and colleges make frequent changes to their career education program offerings. As shown in Exhibit 1, only about half of the career education programs offered by districts and colleges between 2002-03 and 2007-08 had continuous student enrollments throughout the entire period. This included 51% of the 1,318 career education programs offered by individual school districts and 45% of the 2,638 total programs offered by individual colleges during this period.

These changes in enrollments in career education programs reflect both changes in student interests

over time as well as decisions by school districts and colleges to begin, change, or eliminate these programs. As shown in Exhibit 2, our survey of districts and colleges found that they frequently modified their career education program offerings between 2003-04 and 2008-09. Colleges made more frequent changes to their program offerings than did school districts over this period, making 934 program changes compared to 470 program changes by districts. Overall, the institutions were more likely to add or expand programs rather than reducing or eliminating them. For example, colleges added or expanded 637 career education programs over the six-year period compared to 297 program reductions and eliminations.

**Exhibit 1
About Half of the Career Education Programs Offered by Districts and Colleges Did Not Have Continuous Student Enrollments During the Period from 2002-03 to 2007-08**

Program Enrollment Patterns During the Six-Year Period	School Districts (1,318 programs)	Colleges (2,638 programs)
Program had enrollment in all six years	51%	45%
Program's enrollment ended at some point after 2002-03	23%	19%
Program's enrollment began at some point after 2002-03	16%	19%
Program's enrollment began after 2002-03 but was not continuous throughout the rest of the period	7%	16%
Program had periods of enrollment separated by a period of no enrollment	3%	1%

Source: OPPAGA analysis of Department of Education enrollment data.

**Exhibit 2
Institutions Frequently Changed Their Career Education Program Offerings Between 2003-04 and 2008-09**

	Program Change Type	Number of Changes by Academic Year						Total Changes
		2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	
School Districts	Added	4	27	39	36	42	41	189
	Expanded	1	14	18	8	25	19	85
	Reduced	3	4	2	9	8	16	42
	Discontinued	9	24	18	48	27	28	154
	Total	17	69	77	101	102	104	470
Colleges	Added	55	64	79	77	68	59	402
	Expanded	28	16	24	48	46	73	235
	Reduced	1	4	7	22	20	7	61
	Discontinued	18	20	25	64	45	64	236
	Total	102	104	135	211	179	203	934

Source: OPPAGA Program Offering Survey.

School districts and colleges have accelerated program changes in recent years. Districts and colleges responding to our survey made almost twice as many changes to their career education program offerings between 2006-07 and 2008-09 than they did in the preceding three years. Specifically, as shown in Exhibit 3, districts and colleges were more likely to reduce or eliminate programs; the number of programs reduced increased by 290% while the number of programs discontinued increased by 142% during this period.

Districts most often changed health science programs, while colleges most often changed information technology programs. Institutions made more frequent changes to some

occupational training areas. Career education programs are organized into 16 career clusters, which are federally recognized occupational categories with broad industry-validated knowledge and skills statements that define what students need to know and be able to do to achieve success in a chosen field. Exhibits 4 and 5 show the top five career clusters in which programs were added and discontinued by districts and colleges responding to our survey. School districts most frequently added and discontinued programs in the Health Science cluster, while colleges were most active in adding and discontinuing Information Technology programs.

**Exhibit 3
Institutions Have Accelerated Their Program Offering Changes in Recent Years**

	Program Change Type	Changes from 2003-04 to 2005-06	Changes from 2006-07 to 2008-09	Percentage Difference
School Districts	Added	70	119	70%
	Expanded	33	52	58%
	Reduced	9	33	267%
	Discontinued	51	103	102%
	Total	163	307	88%
Colleges	Added	198	204	3%
	Expanded	68	167	146%
	Reduced	12	49	308%
	Discontinued	63	173	175%
	Total	341	593	74%
Total	Added	268	323	21%
	Expanded	101	219	117%
	Reduced	21	82	290%
	Discontinued	114	276	142%
	Grand Total	504	900	79%

Source: OPPAGA Program Offering Survey.

Exhibit 4
The Top Five Career Clusters in Which Institutions
Added Programs from 2003-04 to 2008-09

	Career Cluster	Total Added
School Districts	Health Science	27.7%
	Architecture and Construction	16.5%
	Human Services	7.4%
	Information Technology	7.4%
	Manufacturing	6.9%
Colleges	Information Technology	17.2%
	Health Science	10.9%
	Business Management and Administration	9.2%
	Architecture and Construction	8.5%
	Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources	8.2%

Source: OPPAGA Program Offering Survey.

Exhibit 5
The Top Five Career Clusters in Which Institutions
Discontinued Programs from 2003-04 to 2008-09

	Career Cluster	Total Discontinued
School Districts	Health Science	15.7%
	Architecture and Construction	14.4%
	Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics	13.1%
	Business Management and Admin.	9.8%
	Manufacturing	8.5%
Colleges	Information Technology	26.4%
	Health Science	9.8%
	Architecture and Construction	9.4%
	Arts, A/V Technology and Communication	8.9%
	Law, Public safety and Service	8.5%

Source: OPPAGA Program Offering Survey.

Institutional Profiles

A companion technical report, which is available online, provides detailed information on the number and types of career education program changes made by school districts and Florida College System institutions between 2003-04 and 2008-09.² The institutional profiles include comparisons of each institution’s overall changes to those of similar institutions (size and school district or college). The profiles also identify for each program change the name of the affected career education program, the type of credential it provides to students who complete the program, and the reason given by the institution for the change.

² *Profile of Changes to Florida’s Public Career Education Program Offerings*, OPPAGA [Report No. 10-35](#), April 2010.

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