

Career and Technical Education and the Implications of False Equity

By

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Rodgers Bio

Dr. Ronald L. Rodgers Jr. is originally born in Los Angeles, CA and raised in Rancho Cucamonga, CA, which is in San Bernadino County. He is a graduate of Rancho Cucamonga High School. After high school Dr. Rodgers moved to Baton Rouge, LA where he lived for 17 years. While residing in Baton Rouge, he received his Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Management and an MBA from the University of Phoenix, a second Master's degree in Public Administration from Louisiana State University, and a PhD in Public Policy and Urban Affairs from Southern University and A&M College, where his dissertation research was focused on Career and Technical Education and the implications of inequities. For the past 7 years, Dr. Rodgers has served as a Sr. Corporate Account Executive for the University of Phoenix where he partners with Fortune 500 companies across the nation to help offer solutions for organizational and human capital development. Dr. Rodgers has also been an Independent Consultant for the city of Baton Rouge for the past four years conducting program evaluations for the Department of

Health and Human Services in preparation for federal audit of the East Baton Rouge Parish Head Start Program. Dr. Rodgers is also an Adjunct Professor at multiple colleges where he teaches Business Statistics and Macro Economics. Dr. Rodgers has been married to his wife, LaShon for 11 years and the two have four handsome sons, Ronald III, Cameron, Grayson, and Ashton.

Abstract: This paper is presented to address various issues in Career and Technical Education and Implications of False Equity from a Public Policy viewpoint. It is also meant to illustrate how some of the current trends used by secondary education students in choosing their future career paths are either directly or indirectly having an impact how many students think about their future enrollment in institutions of Higher Learning.

Career and Technical Education and the Implications of False Equity

Introduction

Public policy is the engine that fuels and continues to refuel our democracy, even though contention between ideological perspectives persists. However, very few individuals, if any, can argue that the nation and even the global network is governed by public policy; therefore, government intervention in certain instances is warranted.

Public policy is set in place to be the great equalizer and balances the playing field for individuals and their families to ensure all have equal opportunities and access to the American dream of life liberty and the pursuit of happiness. When income disparities and inequities continue to manifest itself with historically marginalized groups of people, government can set policies such as minimum wage laws, affirmative action, and equal pay for women, to close those gaps and minimize disparities, and ultimately leveling the playing field. When Fortune 500 companies continue to grow exponentially in revenue and in market share, destroying competition and creating monopolies, government can intervene and implement policies of fair competition and economic policies such as Sherman Anti-trust laws to prohibit companies from controlling an entire market or being the sole provider of a product or service. When indigent families and the elderly are denied access to quality healthcare simply because they don't make enough money to afford the premiums offered through employer benefits or due to unemployment, government can intervene and implement policies such as Medicaid and Medicare, to ensure even the elderly and people from a low socioeconomic status still have access to quality healthcare. Public policy is made to benefit the greater good and purposed to serve as many people as possible while also suppressing any sign of negative externalities.

Public Policy and Education (Review)

Of the many substantive policy areas, education policy, arguably, would be the most important in terms of having the greatest impact on society. Sound and effective education policy has the unequivocal power to alter the consequences that would

otherwise manifest itself due to an uneducated society, such as high crime, poverty, and an unskilled labor market. That being said, sound education policy and reform is warranted. Researchers, policy makers, and other education stake holders have continually tried to be innovative in their approach to education reform in this 21st century market. However, strides have been stifled and minimal gains have been overshadowed by partisan politics and conflicting and competing interests. Contritely, kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) education, especially secondary education, has still lacked in areas that has made it difficult for high school graduates to successfully transition to a career or post-secondary education. This disconnect has warranted a new approach to high school education, which seeks to align itself with the needs of the business community to create greater opportunities for high school graduates instead of being stuck in a career that is not rewarding nor meaningful. The scope of this research study focuses its attention Career and Technical Education (CTE), which is part of more recent national education reform efforts under the Carl Perkins Act of 2006. The Perkins Act is the federal legislation that has refueled national education reform efforts with attempts to increase academic quality and relevance, and ensure economic competitiveness for high school graduates. All fifty states are implementing requirements of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006. “The main objective of the Perkins Act is ensuring that all American youths graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge they need to be ready for college and careers” (Meeder, 2008).¹ The 2006 reauthorization included

¹ Meeder, H., & Achieve, I. D. (2008). *The Perkins Act of 2006: Connecting Career and Technical Education with the College and Career Readiness Agenda. January 2008 Policy Brief.* Achieve, Inc.

four significant changes to the Perkins Act. These changes focus on the improvement of CTE programs of study, the expansion of state and local accountability measures, including new measures of technical skill attainment, Tech Prep flexibility and accountability, and the link between CTE and personal and economic competitiveness (Meeder, 2008).²

“Education Reform” has become the most popular phrase in 21st century politics and it has been widely over-used by political candidates nationally and within states to win over an electorate. The realm of education has presented such an interesting dichotomy that it has been almost impossible to identify the cause of the nation’s broken and declining system. This dichotomy demonstrates tension with maintaining high standards to prepare all children for college versus attempting to serve less academically prepared students with the same high achieving standards with the hopes that they will rise to the occasion. Some children are not able to perform at the same levels of other children, so should standards be lowered just to get those students to graduate? Should the curriculum be altered to meet them where they are? Sound K-12 education is the one thing all children deserve but not all are privileged to. Education reform has been sought after for so long, but the same externalities continue to manifest such as, deteriorating inner-city schools, growing achievement gaps between the rich and the poor, and whites and minorities, and now newly induced education markets with forced competition for resources, high quality teachers and students.

² Meeder, H., & Achieve, I. D. (2008). *The Perkins Act of 2006: Connecting Career and Technical Education with the College and Career Readiness Agenda. January 2008 Policy Brief*. Achieve, Inc.

Career and Technical Education (CTE)

How often have we heard people say? “College isn’t for everybody”. “Get a trade”. “Why do you have to learn stuff like algebra that you will never use in real life?” CTE was supposed to level the playing field and make it easy for certain students who just didn’t get the college thing or were simply too poor to afford it, choose alternate career paths and solve the problems caused by social injustice. It is extremely hard to argue against the concept of Career and Technical Education in today’s modern society, particularly amidst massive budget cuts to education made by our Federal and State governments. One only needs to hear to antidotal stories about blue collar garbage truck driver in New York who makes \$100 grand a year or repair servicemen or women who live quite comfortably fixing anything from gourmet foods, or repairing cars, plumbing, computers, heating and air conditioners or even washers and dryers. Contrast this to the high school teacher or recent college grad who is struggling or finding it harder and harder to find a job in his or her field. Try and explain these career choices to a high school kid versus the cost associated with higher education. As excellent as some of these career choices might seem, some critics believe that CTE curriculums will only exacerbate these externalities by placing a band aid over an open wound, instead of addressing the much deeper issues.

Historically, CTE programs have struggled in this regard because the mission and purpose directly contradicted curriculum and instruction and the population the programs were intended to serve. Due to this dichotomous paradigm, it has had a trickle-down effect with organizational supports and external supports simply because

internal and external stakeholders have had conflicting feelings regarding CTE policy and programs and the corresponding goals and objectives. Literature shows, as noted by DeFeo (2015) that students select CTE course for a variety of reasons, many of which are unrelated to their career trajectories; “students may elect these classes as fallbacks if college plans do not materialize, to avoid more challenging courses, or to pursue hobbies” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004; DeFeo, 2015).³

As previously stated, CTE truly has a very rich history stemming back to 1917 with the Smith-Hughes Act, which some consider to really be the first piece of CTE legislation in the U.S, and served as a precursor to the historic Carl D. Perkins Act of 1984. As such, the Carl Perkins Act shaped modern CTE policy. “Today’s CTE has evolved from a limited number of vocational programs available at the turn of the 20th century into a broad system that encompasses a variety of challenging fields in diverse subject areas which are constantly evolving due to the changing global economy” (Association for Career and Technical Education, 2011; Hersperger, Slate, & Edmonson, 2013)⁴ “Though much of the contemporary national discourse around educational initiatives has focused on academic subjects, the CTE realm has also been shaped by ambitious and sweeping federal legislation” (DeFeo, 2015). Hayward and Benson (1993), provided a very comprehensive overview of legislation influencing technical education, as DeFeo (2015) reiterated, with the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, which established aid for technical education in public schools, and with its emphasis on

³ DeFeo, D. J. (2015). Why are You Here? CTE Students' Enrollment Motivations and Career Aspirations. *Career & Technical Education Research*, 40(2), 82-98. doi:10.5328/cter40.2.82

⁴ Hersperger, S. L., Slate, J. p., & Edmonson, S. L. (2013). A REVIEW OF THE CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION RESEARCH LITERATURE. *Journal Of Education Research*, 7(3), 157-179.

the technical curriculum, it was financially and conceptually segregated from the academic curriculum. According to DeFeo (2015), “there was little change in federal policy for 50 years until the Vocational Education Act of 1963, where technical education first appeared as a social agenda, making direct provisions for students with disabilities and low income and minority students.”⁵ While it may have been appropriate for that time, a certain stigma followed CTE, of which it was unpopular for certain groups to be attached to. CTE programs, while theoretically appropriate and repurposed to serve greater audiences, was often referred to as programs for “those other students,” which carried differing delineations depending on who was asked, be it race or SES.

DeFeo (2015) reported that the Educational Amendment Act of 1976 added gender equity and representation to the social agenda, and authorized the National Assessment of Vocational Education (NAVE), which was completed in 1980 and led to the creation of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984.⁶ The Carl Perkins Act has been reauthorized three times, with last time occurring in 2006, and the fourth reauthorization is approaching—this act has shaped CTE policy for the past three decades. “The most interesting change came in 1990 with Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act (Perkins II), which sought to reintegrate technical and academic curricula that had been separated by Smith-Hughes” (DeFeo, 2015).⁷ “Today’s CTE has evolved from a limited number of vocational programs

⁵ DeFeo, D. J. (2015). Why are You Here? CTE Students' Enrollment Motivations and Career Aspirations. *Career & Technical Education Research*, 40(2), 82-98. doi:10.5328/cter40.2.82

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available at the turn of the 20th century into a broad system that encompasses a variety of challenging fields in diverse subject areas which are constantly evolving due to the changing global economy” (Association for Career and Technical Education, 2011; Hersperger, Slate, Edmonson, 2013).

Hersperger, Slate and Edmonson (2013) noted that the 2006 reauthorization of the Carl Perkins Act required CTE to provide increased opportunities for individuals to be competitive in a global work force by developing challenging and integrated academic and technical standards so students are prepared for high-skill, high wage, and high-demand occupations in current and emerging fields.⁸ While CTE is becoming increasingly popular around the nation, especially due to federal mandates from the Carl Perkins and its 2006 reauthorization, there are still mixed reviews on its place in secondary education and the true effectiveness of such programs. “Forty-seven percent of U.S. high schools offer a tech prep program, and most students in US high schools (58.1%) participate in the CTE experience and take at least one CTE course, regardless of race or economic background” (DeLuca, et al., 2006; DeFeo, 2015).⁹

Even with its increasing popularity and widespread participation across the nation, effectiveness remains the question regarding CTE programs and measuring success continues to be a daunting task. “Despite the century-old initiative and the widespread curriculum, there are few empirical or longitudinal studies to document the

⁸ Hersperger, S. L., Slate, J. p., & Edmonson, S. L. (2013). A REVIEW OF THE CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION RESEARCH LITERATURE. *Journal Of Education Research*, 7(3), 157-179.

⁹ DeFeo, D. J. (2015). Why are You Here? CTE Students' Enrollment Motivations and Career Aspirations. *Career & Technical Education Research*, 40(2), 82-98. doi:10.5328/cter40.2.82

effectiveness of CTE initiatives” (DeFeo, 2015).¹⁰ Brown et al. (1998) noted that a lack of data characterized Tech Prep programs in the late 1990s; over a decade and three reauthorizations later, researchers continue to cite a lack of data around program outcomes and impact, as noted by DeFeo (2015). CTE is so polarizing because it has yet to be proven with respect to the way the program narrative has often presented itself, in which CTE serves the purpose of providing students with the requisite skills need to get high wage jobs and be high competitive in the labor market immediately following high school. However, as previously stated, research shows very little evidence of CTE program successfully helping students to generate high incomes through better paying jobs by way of CTE curriculum. Research does, however, show that minorities and those from low SES backgrounds have been disproportionately more likely to participate in CTE programs while most white students participate in more college preparatory programs. “Career and technical education has sometimes privately been called a place for “those kids” – students who have trouble learning, who may have troubled households, and who may not fit the traditional academic mold. The comments are often pejorative, but may highlight the lack of managerial focus many districts place on CTE success” (Morgan, 2011).¹¹ Rojewski and Xing (2013) that CTE policy and programs have a history of being stigmatized as an institutional dumping ground, a second-class educational alternative, and a dead-end curriculum for non-

¹⁰ DeFeo, D. J. (2015). Why are You Here? CTE Students' Enrollment Motivations and Career Aspirations. *Career & Technical Education Research*, 40(2), 82-98. doi:10.5328/cter40.2.82

¹¹ MORGAN, N. P. (2011). Moore County Schools: Rethinking Career & Technical Education to Provide Skills Employers Really Want. *District Management Journal*, 830-37.

white minority students with no other education or career.¹² “The accountability era has ushered in an abundance of school reform initiatives aimed at increasing student achievement and elevating student performance. Amid these varying school reform designs, many teachers have grown weary and skeptical developing the mindset that “this too shall pass” (Fletcher, Lasonen, and Hernandez, 2014).¹³

Rojewski and Xing (2013) conducted a study to examine, not only the quality of the research focused on CTE policy and programs, but also to examine how researchers of CTE have treated the construct of race/ethnicity in recent studies. “Fifty-one of 71 articles published in the CTE research over a 7-years span (2005-2011) were included, and a content analysis found that only one quarter ($n=13$, 25.49) of the eligible studies reported the racial/ethnic composition of their samples. Race/ethnicity was most likely to be reported only when it was used in some type of inferential analysis” (Rojewski, Xing, 2013).¹⁴ As such, Rojewski and Xing (2013) argued that the lack of precise descriptions of sample composition, including gender and race/ethnicity, weakens the potential impact of CTE research, and severely limit one’s inability to determine the representativeness of samples studied and one’s ability to generalize findings to larger populations. Considering how CTE policy and programs have been stigmatized as well as the historical marginalization of minorities and those from a low

¹² Rojewski, J. W., & Xue, X. (2013). Treatment of Race/Ethnicity in Career-Technical Education Research. *Career & Technical Education Research*, 38(3), 245-256. doi:10.5328/cter38.3.245

¹³ Fletcher Jr., E. C., Gordon, H. D., Asunda, P., & Zirkle, C. (2015). A 2015 Status Study of Career and Technical Education Programs in the United States. *Career & Technical Education Research*, 40(3), 191-211. doi:10.5328/cter40.3.191

¹⁴ Rojewski, J. W., & Xue, X. (2013). Treatment of Race/Ethnicity in Career-Technical Education Research. *Career & Technical Education Research*, 38(3), 245-256. doi:10.5328/cter38.3.245

SES, it is paramount to maintain the integrity, transparency and quality of CTE program so that inequities in the education process can be appropriately addressed. Rojewski and Xing (2013) added that it is surprising that researchers' treatment of race/ethnicity in sampling and generalizability, as well as very little general discussion of race/ethnicity within the field, give the changing demographics in the U.S., the prominence of race/ethnicity issues in broader education and social science research communities, the emphasis placed on issues of justice and equity in education, and a history of CTE being stigmatized as an institutional dumping ground, a second-class education alternative, and a dead-end curriculum for non-white minority students. "However, albeit the increasing evidence of the merits of CTE in general, and growing evidence of the positive impact of career academics, there is still a widespread view that college preparation is the primary goal of education, while CTE is oftentimes perceived as for "someone else's children," (Fletcher, Lasonen, & Hernandez, 2014).¹⁵

Prior research has continually shown academic performance gaps between whites and minorities, which has also led to minorities graduating high school at a disproportionate rate compared to their white counterparts. "Poor students and students of color tended to be placed in vocational education and upper-class whites more often were enrolled in the academic track, preparing for college. Vocational education did not become a vehicle for social mobility but rather a dumping ground for the less academically able, and, thus, a means to maintain society stratification" (Aliag,

¹⁵ Fletcher Jr., E. C., Gordon, H. D., Asunda, P., & Zirkle, C. (2015). A 2015 Status Study of Career and Technical Education Programs in the United States. *Career & Technical Education Research*, 40(3), 191-211. doi:10.5328/cter40.3.191

Kotamraju, & Stone, 2014).¹⁶ As such CTE policies and programs have had an extremely difficult time get people to buy into the narrative of the program being for all students' benefits as opposed to certain types of students. "Often an unstated goal of CTE, dropout prevention allows districts to engage and retain students, and hopefully allow students to accumulate sufficient credits for high school graduation. Societal benefits are estimated to be significant—retaining at-risk students through CTE participation can stop more adverse trajectories, including crime and incarceration" (Morgan, 2011).¹⁷ Although CTE may serve the aforementioned purpose, the question still begs, are minority students being prematurely targeted for participation in CTE programs, and are minority students participating in CTE programs at disproportionate rates much high than their white counterparts? If CTE research, such as previously identified, does not cater to the social constructs within CTE policy in programs in terms of racial disparities, then long-term implications can be catastrophic with the perpetuation of income gaps between whites and minorities, simply because white students are being pushed toward college preparatory high school tracks while minorities are being filtered through CTE diploma tracks.

Due to the historical connotations that have been attached to CTE policies and programs and the public perception of such programs, research suggests that teachers and administrators have struggled with appropriately counseling students. Stipanovic and Stringfield (2013) noted that the resistance in advising high-achieving students into

¹⁶ Aliaga, O. A., Kotamraju, P., & Stone III, J. R. (2014). Understanding Participation in Secondary Career and Technical Education in the 21st Century: Implications for Policy and Practice. *High School Journal*, 97(3), 128.

¹⁷ MORGAN, N. P. (2011). Moore County Schools: Rethinking Career & Technical Education to Provide Skills Employers Really Want. *District Management Journal*, 830-37.

CTE programs and discouraging them appeared to be rooted in two issues situated on a common continuum.¹⁸ According to teachers, resistance was based on counselor's lack of knowledge of the diverse CTE programs and their viewing CTE as less academically rigorous. So, with resistance to advising high achieving students to enroll in CTE programs (even discouraging them), teachers instead readily advised low-achieving students to do so, according to a 2013 study. "Some teachers attributed this reluctance on the part of counselors to a lack of understanding of what happens in today's CTE courses, believing that counselors are functioning from the perspective of the vocational education model, which explains the placement of low-achieving students in CTE courses" (Stipanovic & Stringfield, 2013).¹⁹ In this same program evaluation, Stipanovic & Stringfield (2013) reported that one of the teachers that were interviewed referred to some CTE programs as functioning as "kind of a dumping ground, so to speak"—indicating that CTE programs were used as places to put student who would not be successful in more academic environments, which also point to implications of pedagogical differences between CTE programs and college preparatory programs. "In high schools, the only part of the curriculum to hold respect of students, teachers, and parents is the program preparing students for four year college and the baccalaureate" (Fletcher, Lasonen, and Hernandez, 2014).²⁰ This is the reason as to why program and implementation evaluations are such an intricate piece of CTE policy and programs,

¹⁸ Stipanovic, N. n., & Stringfield, S. (2013). A Qualitative Inquiry of Career Exploration in Highly Implemented Career and Technical Education Programs of Study. *International Journal Of Educational Reform*, 22(4), 334-354.

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²⁰ Fletcher Jr., E. C., Gordon, H. D., Asunda, P., & Zirkle, C. (2015). A 2015 Status Study of Career and Technical Education Programs in the United States. *Career & Technical Education Research*, 40(3), 191-211. doi:10.5328/cter40.3.191

which is also indicative of sound public policy—program and implementation evaluations help to assess potential for success, measure performance, identify possible negative externalities and performance gaps, and make program amendments to help mitigate the risks of those externalities actually materializing, ultimately setting the program up for success. “Amid an era of increased accountability, the entire education system is being scrutinized for the lack of adequate student preparation for demands of the 21st century workforce as well as the lack of readiness for the rigor of postsecondary studies (Fletcher, 2006; Stone, Alfeld, & Pearson, 2008; Fletcher, Lasonen, & Hernandez, 2014).²¹

There has also been dichotomous dialogue centered around whether CTE helps to prepare students for postsecondary education or CTE being a deterrent to college all together due to the emphasis placed on workforce readiness. The conflicting views continue to spark national debate, which further dilutes, not only the place of CTE policy and program in the 21st century K-12 education place, but also its overall worth and value to student recipients. “Overall, Tech Prep participation negatively impacts student’s chances for attending college, though it does appear to promote enrollment in 2-year colleges. Concentrators are less likely to aspire to a 4-year degree than academic concentrators” (Cellini, 2006; Stone & Aliaga, 2005; DeFeo, 2015).²² DeFeo (2015) even moved further to note, based on research, that CTE has no impact on credit accrual, GPA, or persistence in college, and Tech Prep participation does not

²¹ Fletcher Jr., E. C., Gordon, H. D., Asunda, P., & Zirkle, C. (2015). A 2015 Status Study of Career and Technical Education Programs in the United States. *Career & Technical Education Research*, 40(3), 191-211. doi:10.5328/cter40.3.191

²² DeFeo, D. J. (2015). Why are You Here? CTE Students' Enrollment Motivations and Career Aspirations. *Career & Technical Education Research*, 40(2), 82-98. doi:10.5328/cter40.2.82

correlate with increased college GPA in technical program areas. Citing a study by Hughes and Karp (2006), DeFeo (2015) concluded by stating that Tech Prep has not helped students with transition to postsecondary work. The data from DeFeo's study suggests that a lack of career knowledge characterizes the high school CTE experience, and students' limited knowledge about career opportunities really confounded his findings.

In a 2000 study by Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, data was analyzed on 1,700 students who also attended one of the nine career academies evaluated by Hersperger et al. in their 2013 study. Authors found that standardized achievement test scores 490 students demonstrated no significant differences in reading or math standardized test scores of students enrolled in a career academy than non-vocational students. There are a few different implications one can draw from the results presented on the standardized test scores. First, the presented standardized scores (although from a very small sample) substantiate that students entrenched in CTE programs can perform academically just as well as those students taking college preparatory courses. Second, the validation of comparable academic performance also gives further implications of both student segments ability to get into 4-year universities with the potential to do well. Lastly, and probably the most disheartening and troubling implication, although the previously mentioned research results showed evidence through standardized test scores, that there was very little difference in academic performance between CTE students and academic curriculum students, most CTE students will still decide to bi-pass college and enter the workforce immediately following high school due to historical program trends. Prior research has continually

suggested, through empirical data, that most CTE program participants consisted of a very disproportionate number of minorities and low-income students, in which CTE programs were also categorized and stigmatized as a dumping ground for non-white high-class students. Inappropriately and prematurely encouraging and placing students on CTE programs can and will perpetuate a cycle of long-term income gaps, ultimately creating a permanent underclass.

To qualitatively gauge perception and knowledge of the Louisiana Jump Start program, the state's version of CTE, a survey was administered to junior and senior level students in the East Baton Rouge Parish (EBRP) School District. This survey was administered over a period of four months, and across three different high schools in EBRP school district. The survey was created using survey monkey. Approximately 460 ($n=460$) junior and senior students were sampled in the EBRP school district and responses captured demographic information including race, gender, household status (who they live with), parent's level of education, free or reduced lunch, GPA, ACT scores and chosen diploma track. Other questions focused on degree of information received to aid in choosing a diploma track, individuals who helped most during the decision process, level of knowledge around the Louisiana Jump Start program, attitude on equity of the program and relocation plans post high school/college.

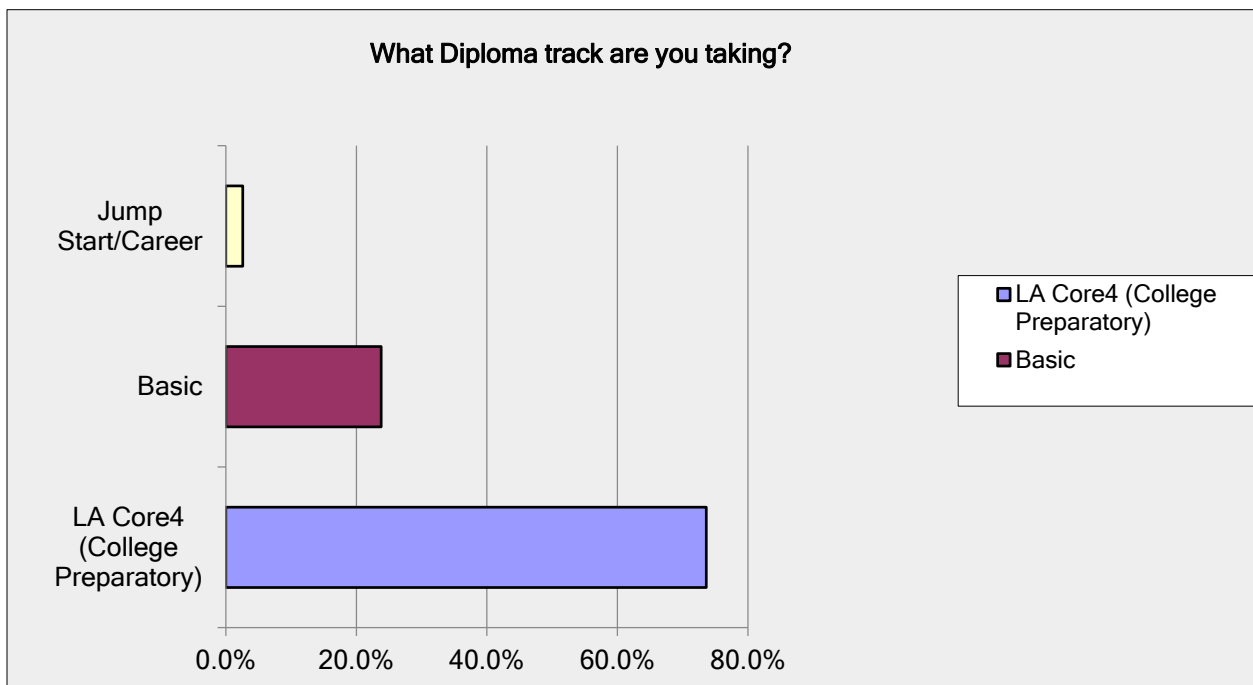
This survey had 18 closed-ended questions and served to directly align with the research questions for the overall purpose of this study. Although, research studies can show correlations, trends, and associations that can aid in depicting implications and making inferences, studies cannot, however, show causation with complete confidence due to the number of variables that are involved in research studies and the

corresponding research design and data collection methods. Therefore, the goal for the survey results that are being presented are to identify trends and the subsequent implications that may be drawn that will help to add to the existing body of research, create new ideas for additional related studies, and make the appropriate policy recommendations that will help to mitigate the perceived risks of negative externalities manifesting, which will ultimately help to improve the program. The survey results were analyzed using Microsoft Excel.

As previously stated, approximately 460 students completed the survey of which, 57.9% (264 students) were African American, 36% (164 students) were White, 1.8% (8 students) were Asian, 1.3% (6 students) were Latino, and 3.1% (14 students) classified as being a part of another race or perhaps mixed. This aggregate demographic information is extremely important because one can see that the racial makeup of the junior and senior class of the EBRP school district is pre-dominantly African American and White, with roughly 60% of the students being of African American descent and their White counter-parts not falling too far behind at roughly 40%.

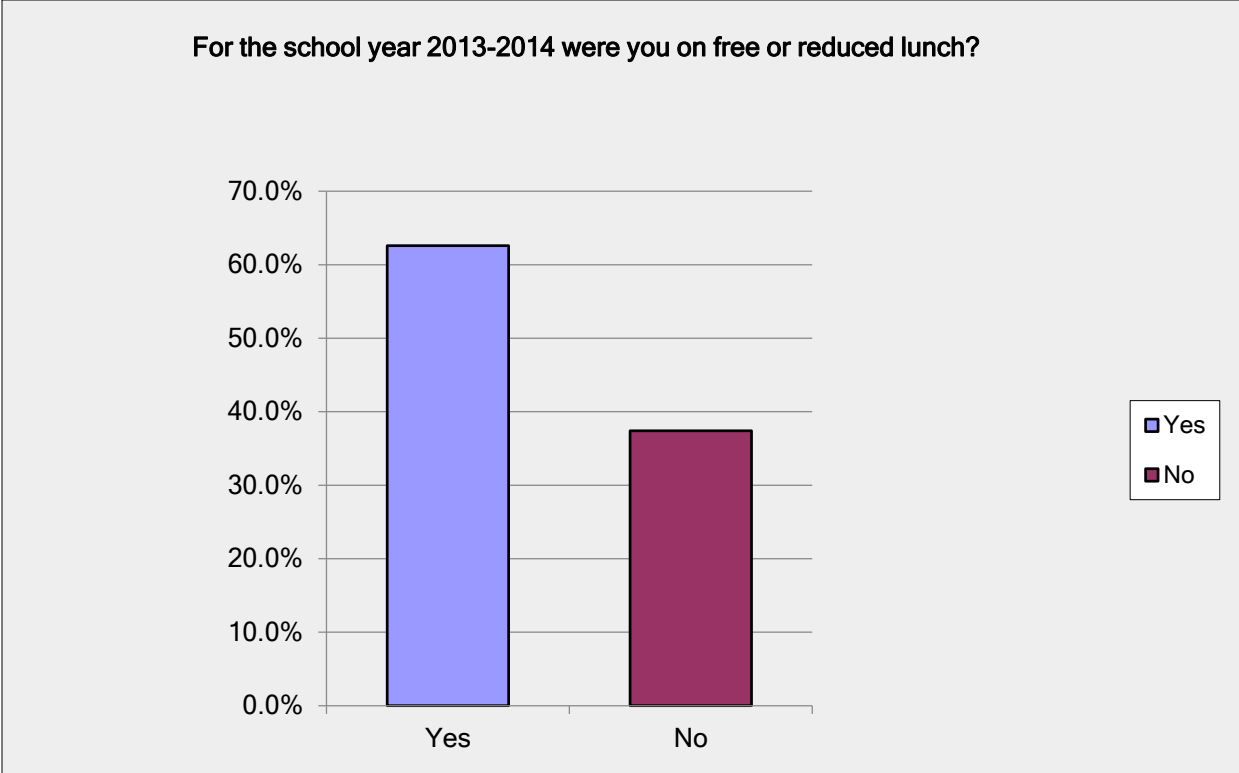
When asked their current diploma track, the responses were astonishing and there was cause for great concern. As an aggregate, 73.6% of the students reported being on the LA Core4 (college preparatory) track, 23.8% were on the Basic track, and only 2.6% were on the Jump Start (career) track. This is a major concern because evidence clearly shows that students either do not know about or do not have a clear understanding of the Jump Start program, which is causing them to stay away from it. As such, this could have further implications in the near and distant future in terms of bad public policy that is continuing to be funded. Research findings are in no way

shape or form invoking any implicit thoughts or subliminal messaging around the program being sub-standard, however there is an explicit understanding that program success is partly predicated upon high participation, and right now participation is minuscule. Clearly, students need to be further educated on the program and program officials and school administrators need to be sure that students know and understand the current and post high school opportunities and possibilities they have before them. As shown in the GPA data, 31% of the sample reported a GPA of 2.5 or lower, with 7% of that percentage falling below 2.0, so this program would be a great fit for at least 31% of the sample.



What Diploma track are you taking?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
LA Core4 (College Preparatory)	73.6%	334
Basic	23.8%	108
Jump Start/Career	2.6%	12
<i>answered question</i>		454

During the survey process, it was important that socio-economic status demographic information was also captured, to aid with answering key research questions. Traditionally, education research has used the state's free and reduced lunch program to track socio-economic status since eligibility is based on income and corresponding poverty rates. This component, however, presented a bit of a challenge, considering that the 2015-16 school year was the first year that lunch was provided for free in the state of Louisiana. As such, the question to track socio-economic status inquired about the free and reduced school lunch eligibility for the 2013-14 school year under the assumption that very little changed in students' socio-economic situation. When asked about their eligibility status for free or reduced lunch for the 2013-14 school year, research shows that 62.6% were eligible for free and reduced lunch while 37.4% were not. This information is good know considering the fact the one of the research questions focuses on academic performance gaps between the rich and the poor, as well as the program's propensity to perpetuate these gaps through being a deterrent to college. The socio-economic data will be placed into clearer perspective during the Cross-Tab Analysis, once segmented with other variables.



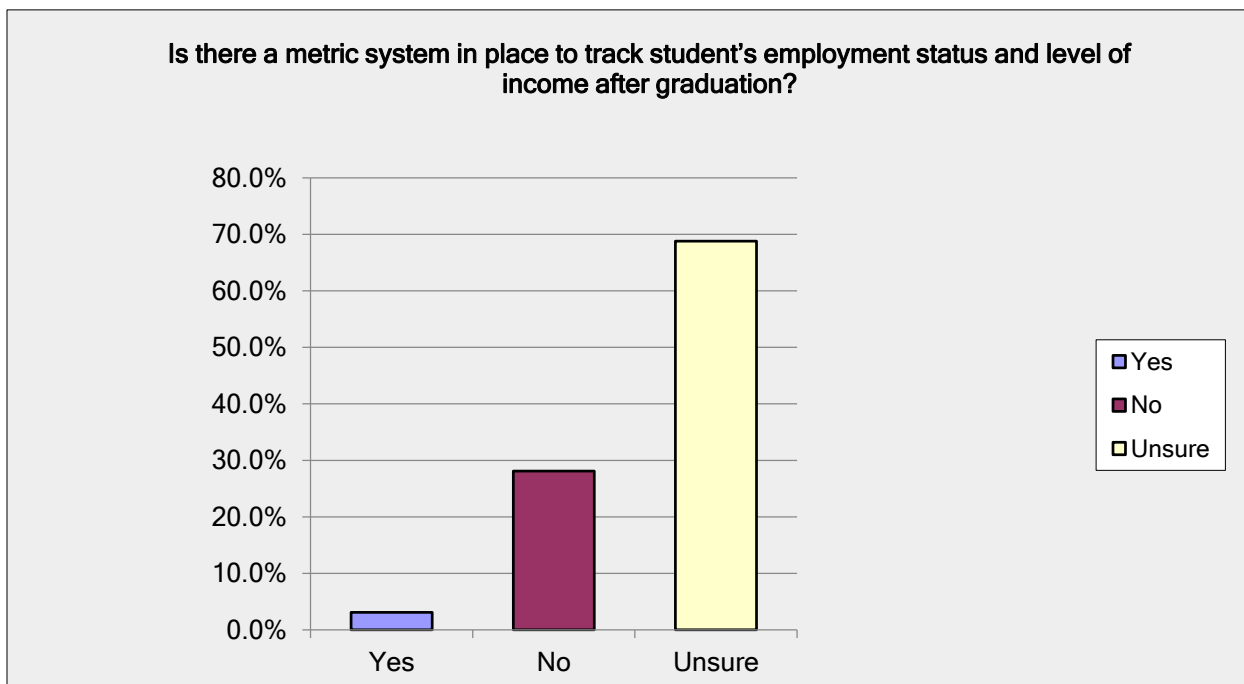
For the school year 2013-2014 were you on free or reduced lunch?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	62.6%	286
No	37.4%	171
<i>answered question</i>		457
<i>skipped question</i>		3

In an effort quantitatively gauge perception, knowledge, degree of collaboration, and collective wisdom around which the Louisiana Jump Start program was built, a survey was administered to teachers and school administrators in the EBRP School District. This survey was administered over a period of four months, and across three different high schools in EBRP school district. The survey was created using survey monkey, although the surveys were administered and completed on paper for ease of process and to keep from interrupting the learning environment. Research assistants

were hired to input the paper survey responses into survey monkey to access the analytics and conduct statistical analysis. Approximately 33 teachers (those who teach junior and senior courses) and administrators in EBRP school district participated in the survey and responses could capture information on individuals who helped most during the decision process, level of knowledge around the Louisiana Jump Start program, attitude on equity of the program and other key information that helped to answer the research questions.

This survey had 18 closed-ended questions and served to directly align with the research questions for the overall purpose of this study. As previously state, although, research studies can show correlations, trends, and associations that can aid in depicting implications and making inferences, studies cannot, however, show causation with complete confidence due to the number of variables that are involved in research studies and the corresponding research design and data collection methods. Therefore, the goal for the survey results that are being presented are to identify trends and the subsequent implications that may be drawn that will help to add to the existing body of research, create new ideas for additional related studies, and make the appropriate policy recommendations that will help to mitigate the perceived risks of negative externalities manifesting, which will ultimately help to improve the program. The survey results were analyzed using SPSS and were split into two components like the preceding student survey analysis section. The first analyses component were simple analysis of the aggregate results of the entire sample population using key questions and responses.

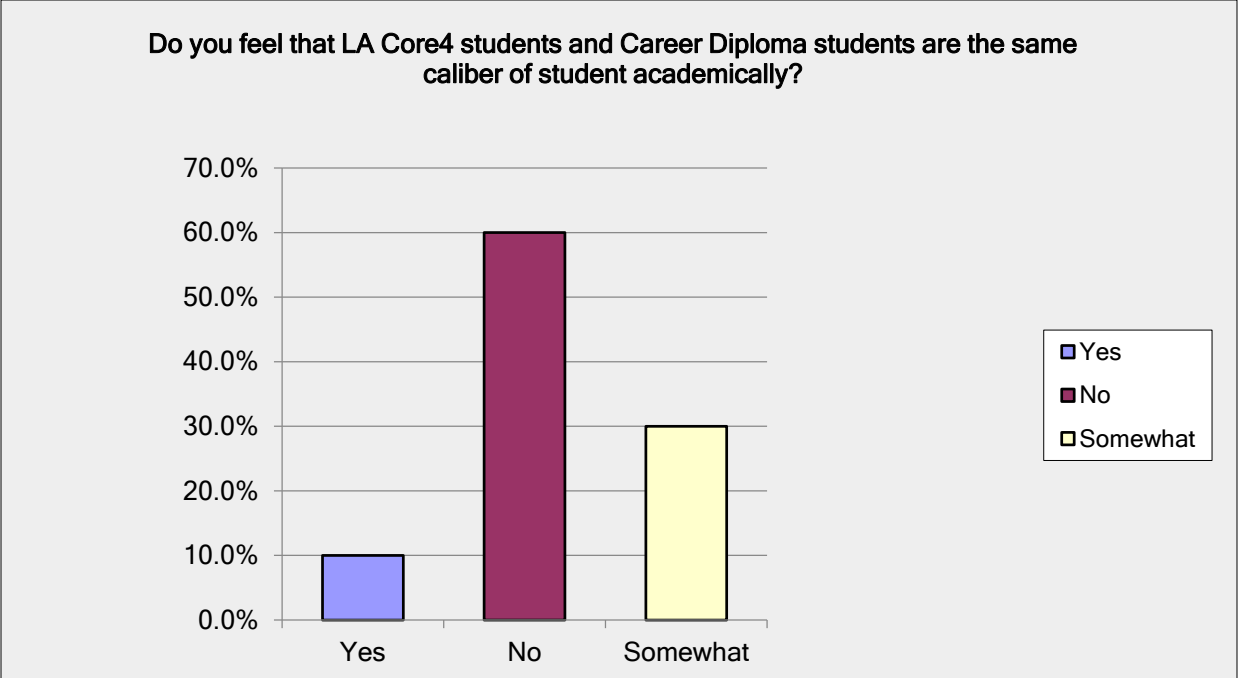
Program success will be predicated upon, not only program participation, which is currently at 2.6% of all juniors and seniors, but also participants' ability to get high wage jobs that correspond with their chosen graduation pathways. As such, post-graduation metrics are paramount to this program, to track employment and income status. However, when asked if there was a metric system in place to track student's employment and level of income after high school, 3.1% of the teachers and administrators answered yes, 28.1% answered no, and 68.8% were unsure. Teachers and administrators went through rigorous training for the program; therefore, all should be abreast on how program success will be measured. It should be of major concern that roughly 28% of the respondents stated there was no measurement system in place while 69% was not even sure.



Is there a metric system in place to track student's employment status and level of income after graduation?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	3.1%	1
No	28.1%	9
Unsure	68.8%	22
<i>answered question</i>		32
<i>skipped question</i>		1

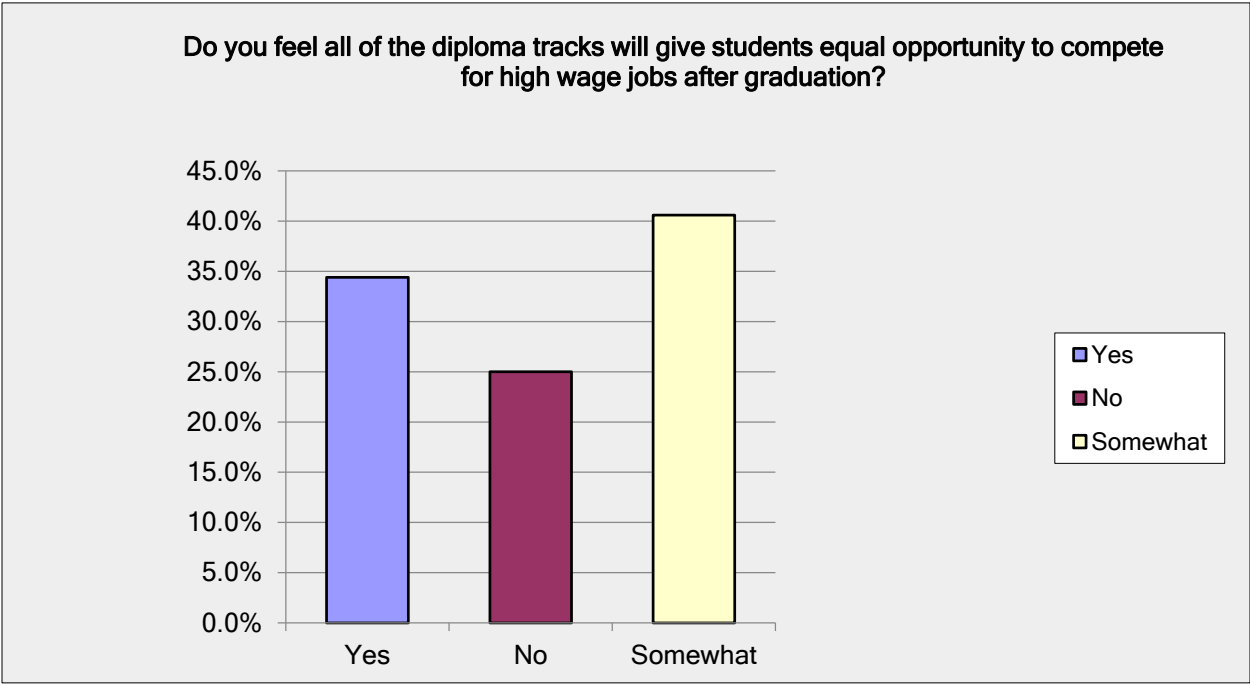
The preceding question regarding nationally marketability provides the perfect segue into the next question because the two questions and subsequent thought processes of the teacher and administrator respondents could carry high degrees of associations. It was identified that roughly 61% of the teachers and administrators were unsure if the career diploma students would be able to compete nationally for high wage jobs with 21% of the respondents not believing that the career diploma students would be marketable in the national labor marketplace. When asked if they felt that the LA Core4 students and the Career Diploma students were the same caliber of student, only 10% of the respondents answered yes, 60% believed they were not the same caliber of student, and 30% answered maybe. Because 60% of the respondents did not feel that career diploma students were of the same academic caliber as LA Core4 students, this could also be associated with the reasoning of the 21% of respondents who did not feel the career diploma students would be ready to compete in the national labor marketplace for high wage jobs as well as the 61% of respondents who were unsure if they would be nationally marketable.



Do you feel that LA Core4 students and Career Diploma students are the same caliber of student academically?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	10.0%	3
No	60.0%	18
Somewhat	30.0%	9
<i>answered question</i>		30
<i>skipped question</i>		3

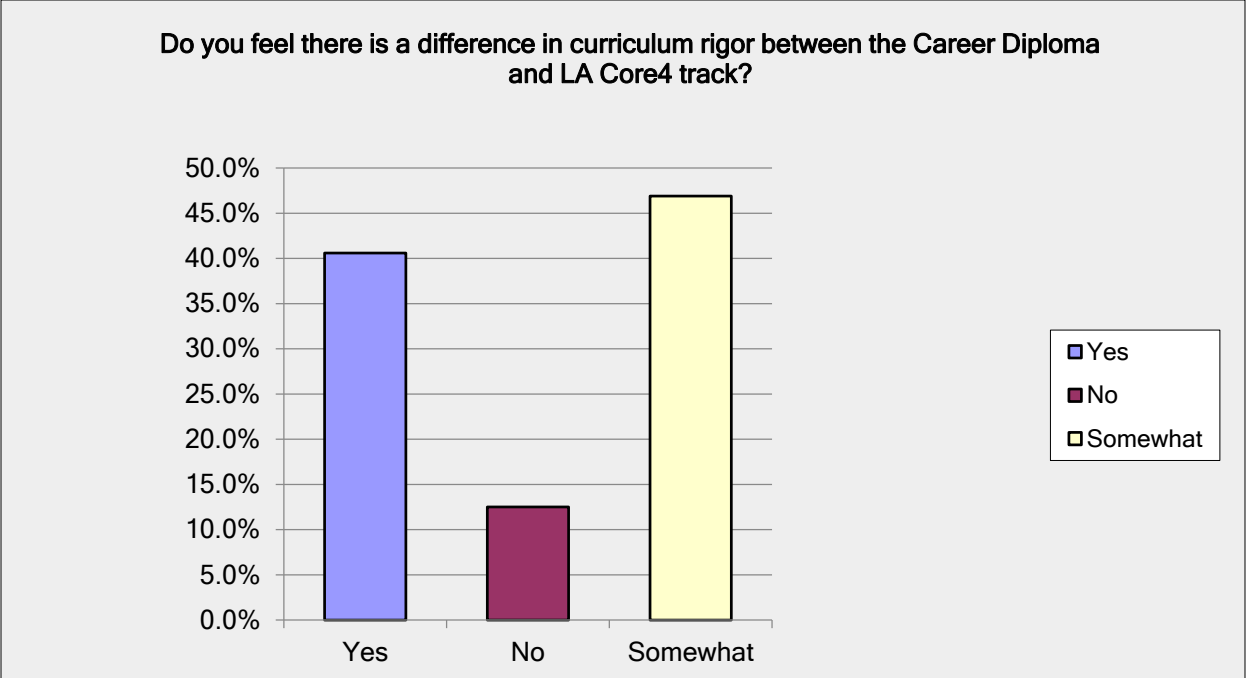
While some of the previous questions on the teacher and administrator survey provided more specificity on the social construct that was being presented, such as national labor marketability, pedagogical differences in diploma tracks, and differences in academic performances between students of differing diploma tracks, the next question focused on general opinions of equal opportunity to compete for high wage jobs across all diploma tracks. When asked if they felt that all diploma tracks would give students equal opportunity to compete for high wage jobs after graduation, 34.4% of the

respondents answered yes, 25% answered no, and 40.6% stated somewhat. The responses were interesting because of the wide variance of percentages across the three possible answers. Interestingly, most of the respondents appear skeptical about the equity of program and the program’s ability to serve participants with the same quality and rigor as the LA Core4 track, and ultimately produce positive results of career readiness. Further analysis will be conducted during the Cross-Tab Analysis.



Do you feel all of the diploma tracks will give students equal opportunity to compete for high wage jobs after graduation?			
Answer Options		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		34.4%	11
No		25.0%	8
Somewhat		40.6%	13
<i>answered question</i>			32
<i>skipped question</i>			1

The last variable for aggregate analysis is curriculum and teacher and administrator opinions on whether or not they feel there is a vast difference in rigor between the career track and the LA Core4 track. In earlier analysis, it was already identified that 48% of the respondents stated there was a difference in academic performance between the two subgroups--students on the career diploma track and students on the LA Core4 track. In addition, 60% of the respondents also felt that the students from the differing diploma tracks were not of the same caliber, and 25% the respondents did not feel that career diploma track and the LA Core4 track would give students equal opportunity to compete for high wage jobs. From an analytical perspective, the aforementioned variables or questions further substantiate the responses from the teachers and administrators when asked about their feelings toward the pedagogical or curriculum differences in rigor between the career diploma track and the LA Core4 track. It is very interesting to see how this categorical data is closely correlated once analyzed and placed in a much clearer perspective. In the case of pedagogical or curriculum rigor and the difference between tracks, 40.6% of the respondents stated yes there is a difference, 12.5% answered no to there being a difference, and 46.9% answer somewhat, which I would further interpret as this segment of responders really being unsure of the difference in rigor. This type of comparative analysis is vital because it helps the program to eradicate or minimize the inequities that may exist; especially those that draw a clear line of distinction between students and their perceived academic performance, employability and quality of life.



Do you feel there is a difference in curriculum rigor between the Career Diploma and LA Core4 track?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	40.6%	13
No	12.5%	4
Somewhat	46.9%	15
<i>answered question</i>		32
<i>skipped question</i>		1

Conclusion

Increasingly, many high school students today are being told that getting a job is more about getting certifications and certificates rather than getting college degrees. Many choose For Profit, On-Line and time shortened programs as their career path of choice. While the true answer may just depend on the exact type of job or career path you are choosing, Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs do provide an alternative path to many students as they find jobs. We find that those critics who feel

that many (CTE) programs do not challenge students enough, especially in high school or do not allow them to reach their full potential are not completely wrong. They would argue that given a choice between a difficult course or an easy course, or a hard path or easy path, and without proper guidance, students are more likely to choose the easy way out. Thus, they will never be able to explore or even understand their full potential. This can lead to regrets when they mature later. These same critics would go on to argue that the result is that most of these students, with noted exceptions, find themselves in what might be considered a permanent underclass to their own long-term detriment.

Traditionally, the College and University response to Career and Technical Education has been that these programs are good at getting your foot in the door or getting you in at entry level positions, but horrible when it comes to promotions and advancement in these same jobs. This has been the argument used for years to get students to consider putting more weight on attending 4-year programs and beyond. The main problem that Colleges and Universities find themselves faced with today is one of not being able to adopt to the explosion of options that students are being given. Trying to put it all together will become increasingly more difficult as enrollment numbers in many 4-year institutions continue to decline.