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**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ANNOUNCES 16 CAREER CLUSTERS:
NEW DIRECTIONS FOR EDUCATION**

Submitted by
Nancy Langley Raynor

For about two years, the U.S. Department of Labor and the National Skills Standards Board have been including in their commentary references to “economic sectors,” first 15 and now 16 in number. It has only been since last fall, however, that the U. S. Department of Education and the Office of Vocational and Adult Education have been addressing 16 career clusters. This was confirmed on March 16, 2000 at the Hyatt in Washington, DC when Secretary Richard Riley and Assistant Secretary Patricia McNeil recognized “career clusters” as new directions for education.

Speeches and discussion were introduced with a white paper. The following are segments from the white paper, “Career Clusters: New Directions for Education.”

“A major role for education has always been to prepare students for meaningful careers. To achieve that goal in today’s world requires education to adjust its focus. Over the past several decades-technological advances have significantly impacted the nature of work in the United States. Many careers, once accessible in the past to those who graduated from high school, no longer exist. The stark reality facing parents, students, schools and employers is that the jobs of today require much education and training of those individuals who fill them.

Experiences learned through Vocational Technical Education, such as Tech Prep and School-to-Work clearly show that in addition to increasing standards, providing relevance is an important key to improving student achievement and suggests a new direction for education. Students who grasp the relevance of what they are learning and recognize how it relates to their future are motivated to work harder and enroll in more rigorous courses.

Career Clusters provide a new structure, by which school can organize students according to their career goals and interests. They (Career Clusters) become a tool that counselors, students and parents can use to assist students in planning their pathways to college and/or employment. The 16 broad Career Clusters represent all careers from entry level through professional/technical management.”

U. S. Department of Education Career Clusters are identified as follows:

Arts, Audio Video Technology & Communications

Hospitality & Tourism

Business & Administrative Services

Information Technology

Legal & Protective Services

Transportation, Distribution & Logistics

Public Administration/Government Services

Financial Services

Agriculture & Natural Resources

Health Sciences

Human Services

Construction

Manufacturing

Education & Training Services

Wholesale/Retail Sales & Services

Scientific Research, Engineering & Technical Services