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NEXTLEVEL
POSTSECONDARY CTE LEADERS

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For this special feature on fellows in the NextLevel Postsecondary CTE Leadership Program, we addressed the biggest challenge educators are facing nationwide: faculty recruitment and retention.



Karen Lyn Saysay
Title V HSI Program Director,
Los Angeles City College

What advice would you give to someone thinking about a career in CTE?

I've come to appreciate the important role of career and technical education (CTE) in shaping diverse career pathways, whether in social sciences, STEM fields or law. My advice to those aspiring to thrive in CTE is simple: Learn the art of networking with industry partners. The ability to forge meaningful connections is necessary from classroom education to employment.

In your opinion, what types of professional development are most effective in retaining CTE educators?

In my experience, one of the most valuable professional development opportunities for CTE educators involves collaboration with non-CTE instructors. When given the opportunity to work together on projects — pairing an English teacher with a CTE business instructor, a math teacher with an engineering technology educator, or coders with game design artists — positive results can arise. This approach can yield innovative teaching methods and valuable experiences for educators and students alike.



Christian L. Zimmerman
Technical Assistance Coordinator,
University of Central Florida

What motivated you to choose a career in career and technical education?

The opportunity to effect change led me to my career in CTE. New learning opportunities for students with disabilities have transformed their lives, the lives of their families, and their campuses and communities. I take pride in knowing that I was a part of those transformations. To someone making the same choice, I advise that you don't let the hard days win. Embrace change and understand that even the worst of days won't last forever.

“A brisk walk around campus can do wonders on a bad day.”

What types of professional development are most effective in retaining CTE educators?

Professional development sessions that are meaningful and resonate on an emotional level are the most effective in retaining CTE educators. Making PD meaningful is like connecting with a character in a book or television show. You become invested.



Kristi Dixon
Dean of General Education and Professional Programs,
BridgeValley Community and Technical College

What motivated you to choose a career in career and technical education?

I began my career as an adjunct faculty member at a university. My path was set. At the university, teaching, is where I wanted to be. Then I took an additional adjunct position at a community and technical college, and I absolutely fell in love with the students and the impact I saw that I could make in that environment. Breaking down barriers and creating paths for students to get where they want to go is my motivation.

Can you share some successful strategies you have implemented to recruit faculty? And, in your opinion, what types of professional development are most effective in retaining CTE educators?

Building strong relationships with industry partners has been a successful strategy in recruiting faculty. In fact, most of our workforce programming faculty come directly from industry. Often, these experts have had no prior experience in formal teaching. Professional development and training that includes some form of pedagogy and reporting process instruction can go a long way in making our industry experts feel confident in their role as faculty.



Karen Treas

Chief Administrative Officer and Vice President of Student Services, Moore Tech

What motivated you to choose a career in career and technical education? What advice would you give to someone making the same choice?

I stumbled into career and technical education by chance and swiftly discovered my deep passion for it. Witnessing students embark on their career journeys fills me with immense joy. My advice to newcomers in the field: Believe in your mission and forge lasting relationships with community and industry partners.

What types of professional development are most effective in retaining CTE educators?

CTE educators, often former tradespeople proud of their skills, are passionate about sharing their knowledge. They want to feel a sense of accomplishment by making a difference in students' lives. Effective professional development should focus on practical skills like curriculum development, organizational skills, and professional communication, which many instructors may not have formal training in.



Lacey Boschetto

Assistant Professor, Utah State University

What motivated you to choose a career in career and technical education?

Becoming a CTE educator was a natural choice for me; I was inspired by my mother, a dedicated CTE teacher. Watching her impact generations of students, seeing their faces light up when they spoke of her, deeply moved me. I witnessed firsthand how her teaching transformed lives, instilling confidence and skills. My goal is to continue this legacy.

“I strive to create an engaging and supportive environment where students can thrive and build a successful future.”

Can you share some successful strategies you have implemented to recruit CTE educators?

When recruiting and retaining CTE educators, I emphasize the unique opportunity CTE offers to specialize in a passion. CTE educators can deeply engage with their interests while making a significant impact on students' lives. This dual role of pursuing personal passion and igniting similar passions in students is incredibly fulfilling, making CTE education a deeply rewarding profession. This approach helps attract and keep dedicated, enthusiastic educators in the field.



Joy Vann-Hamilton

Founder and CEO, RW2 Career and Technical Education

What motivated you to choose a career in career and technical education?

I was motivated to start RW2 Career and Technical Education, a nonprofit postsecondary school, after having worked as an academic dean for two for-profit schools. CTE's emphasis on hands-on learning from industry-experienced instructors and short-term, nontraditional learning opportunities were and are necessary.

Can you share some successful strategies you have implemented to recruit CTE educators?

RW2 includes language in our job postings about candidates with a demonstrated commitment to sharing their knowledge and skills to help people change their lives. We also give prospective candidates the option to visit classes to see the teaching and learning experience in real time and meet with current instructors.



Kyle Fulton

Engineering and CIT Lab Coordinator,
Central Ohio Technical College

What motivated you to choose a career in career and technical education?

The chance to provide others with the same opportunities I have been afforded was my motivating factor to choose a career in CTE. It has been very impactful and fulfilling to grow into this field.

“I would not be where I am at today without the skills I learned through career and technical education.”

Advice I would give aspiring professionals considering a career in CTE is to go into it open-minded and be ready to learn from others!

Can you share some successful strategies you have implemented to recruit CTE educators?

Work-life balance is key, and we try to promote that. We also try to seek industry professionals who understand what is required to be successful in the field, which includes taking training that aligns to emerging technology. We encourage them to leverage their knowledge in the lab or classroom.



Kimber-lee Suiter

Assistant Director of Academic
Coaching and Tutoring, Greenville
Technical College

What motivated you to choose a career in career and technical education?

I am deeply passionate about supporting students in achieving academic success. The encouragement and assistance I received from my family and my school's resources were instrumental in helping me complete my education. However, I recognize that not all students have access to such support systems. That's why I have dedicated myself to this path.

What types of professional development are most effective in retaining CTE educators?

Ongoing professional development is valuable for educators as it allows them to learn new skills and techniques. By networking with other CTE educators from different campuses, educators can share innovative ideas and practices. Attending conferences and joining organizations like the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) can further enhance their professional development and improve the quality of education they provide.



Lizeth Fils-Aime

Director of Adult Education, West-
ern Maricopa Education Center
(West-MEC)

What motivated you to choose a career in career and technical education?

What advice would you give to someone making the same choice?

My career in career and technical education came by opportunity. A colleague joined the West-MEC team. When the position for financial aid became available, she made me aware of the opportunity, but I did not know how much my career would evolve in the CTE world. Careers in CTE are rewarding all around. You give back to the community with your work and contribution. In turn, those you help give back to the community.

Can you share some successful strategies you have implemented to recruit faculty? And, in your opinion, what types of professional development are most effective in retaining CTE educators?

A couple of successful strategies include (1) an increase in salary and (2) utilizing program and institutional advisory councils to support the efforts to find and hire qualified instructors. Instructors also help find other instructors.

Professional development that immediately helps the educator be more effective is key. Instructors, no different from our students, need to find immediate value in their learning.



Tola Francis-Sanus

Tech Prep Consultant,
Marion Technical College

What motivated you to choose a career in career and technical education? What advice would you give to someone making the same choice?

I chose this career in CTE to help students gain practical skills, confidence, and competency in their chosen field. My advice to someone making the same choice is to be adaptable in teaching and learning styles. Make connections with local businesses for internships and job placements, and continuously update your skills and knowledge as you shape the future professionals.

“Always find ways to inspire and support your students.”

What types of professional development are most effective in retaining CTE educators?

CTE educators benefit most from opportunities to attend conferences and workshops on innovative teaching, share best practices with other colleagues in the same field, and network with industry partners while updating their skills and credentials. This can foster community support and recognition of their achievement, which leads to higher retention.



Tara Lindahl

Director of Pre-College Pathways,
Kansas State University

What motivated you to choose a career in career and technical education? What advice would you give to someone making the same choice?

I had a support system of agriculture teachers as a high school and college student that really encouraged and saw potential in me when I didn't see it. Their support in helping me find my niche is what inspired me to go into career and technical education. My advice is, always be open to growth and mentoring.

Can you share some successful strategies you have implemented to recruit faculty?

We rely on word of mouth and encourage our instructors to be ambassadors of our institution. They often find the best instructors because they speak of the benefit of teaching CTE. Retaining CTE teachers is about making them feel valued and challenged and figuring out what they need to feel supported.



David J. Shofstahl

Apprenticeship Coordinator and
Skilled Trades Program Manager,
Mountain Gateway Community College

What motivated you to choose a career in career and technical education?

I didn't realize it then, but my journey in CTE actually began when I was 16 and my dad sent me to work as a mason's apprentice for a friend. I recognize now that my apprenticeship was more than just job training; my boss was an inspirational teacher who nurtured my desire to understand the "why" behind the "how."

Can you share some successful strategies you have implemented to recruit faculty? And, in your opinion, what types of professional development are most effective in retaining CTE educators?

Many of the CTE teaching roles at my college are part-time positions. Through partnerships with employers and rehabilitative service agencies, we are able to recruit from groups of recent retirees and people with disabilities who have content expertise but may no longer be able to do the work. Our program managers work directly with their instructors to identify and support teaching needs. Also, to incentivize participation in training or professional development, we include compensation in their teaching contracts to account for any additional time commitments that might be imposed.



Alexia Rolle

Dean of CTE, Miami Dade College

What motivated you to choose a career in career and technical education? What advice would you give to someone making the same choice?

I chose a career in education because I have a passion for teaching, helping others and preparing students for the workforce. CTE programs teach about practical, hands-on skills that prepare students for careers, which allows the educators to see the impact of the teaching. CTE covers a wide range of disciplines and therefore attracts a diverse group of students. CTE professionals must be flexible and empathetic with all students and situations.

Can you share some successful strategies you have implemented to recruit faculty? And, in your opinion, what types of professional development are most effective in retaining CTE educators?

Miami Dade College strives to be an equal access and equal opportunity institution that does not discriminate. Recruiting efforts are evaluated to ensure that recruiting platforms and job fairs are yielding qualified applicants. The college also utilizes its workforce advisory committee to refer vital CTE educators for job opportunities.

“Professional development for CTE educators should always include collaborations with other peers and sharing of best practices.”



Jeanette Thomas

Equity Consultant, Iowa Department of Education

What motivated you to choose a career in career and technical education? What advice would you give to someone making the same choice?

The advice and guidance of mentors contributed to my career in CTE. I would advise anyone interested to surround themselves with like-minded professionals and network. Always be on the path of lifelong learning.

Can you share some successful strategies you have implemented to recruit faculty?

We rely heavily on business and industry partnerships and advisory committees to recruit recent retirees and those seeking a career change into the CTE classroom. Supporting CTE educators through professional development, administrative support and recognition are effective strategies in retaining our staff.



Eileen Will

Perkins Director, Hostos Community College

What motivated you to choose a career in career and technical education?

My parents were not afforded the opportunity to attend college due to their struggles as first-generation immigrants. As a result, they fought hard to instill the importance of pursuing the educational opportunities afforded to me. Despite having my parents' unwavering support, I still encountered obstacles as a first-generation college student. Now, as a higher education administrator, I strive to eliminate some of the barriers I faced when working toward my college degree.

What types of professional development are most effective in retaining CTE educators?

In my opinion, the most effective types of professional development are based on faculty needs, changing industry needs, and changing student needs — built on community input and updated best practices in higher education.



Brandon Hensley

Dean of CTE, McDowell Technical Community College

What motivated you to choose a career in career and technical education?

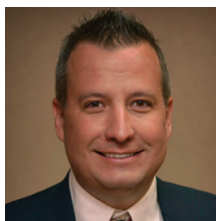
My journey into career and technical education began with a passion for mechanical engineering and technology. I was inspired by the tangible, real-world applications of CTE and the potential to make a significant impact on students' lives.

Can you share some successful strategies you have implemented to recruit faculty? And, in your opinion, what types of professional development are most effective in retaining CTE educators?

At McDowell Technical Community College, we've successfully recruited CTE educators by establishing strong industry partnerships and offering pathways for industry professionals to transition into teaching roles.

“We promote a supportive work culture and a work-life balance.”

For retaining CTE educators, the most effective professional development includes continuous, industry-specific training, leadership development programs, and opportunities for educators to collaborate on curriculum development projects. Additionally, fostering a community of practice where educators can share best practices and innovations can enhance retention.



John Holley

Dean for Technologies, Calhoun Community College

What motivated you to choose a career in career and technical education?

My maternal grandfather was a machinist by trade. He grew up without a father, growing tobacco in the mountains of east Tennessee, and only attended school through the eighth grade. His influence on me and all that he taught me throughout my formative years was probably the most impactful part of my upbringing. He directed me to learn a technical trade, not a specific one. As I learned and went into the workforce, I found many others who were interested in learning but did not have a mentor or guiding influence to help them grow. An employer early in my career encouraged me to step up and help teach others. This began my decades-long path in career and technical education.

Can you share some successful strategies you have implemented to recruit faculty? And, in your opinion, what types of professional development are most effective in retaining CTE educators?

Successful recruitment strategies include targeted outreach to industry professionals and alumni, offering competitive salaries, and providing clear career advancement paths and flexible schedules. In the Technologies Division of Calhoun, we have found the most effective professional development to be faculty- and staff-directed. They utilize collaborative learning meetings and networking with cross-disciplinary representatives to improve their job performance.



Tonia Shook

Director, Fred K. Marchman Technical College

What advice would you give to someone thinking about a career in CTE?

Careers in CTE are diverse and essential, offering paths to success and fulfillment that align with individual talents and aspirations. I am grateful to serve as the director of a technical college where we champion these valuable career opportunities and empower students to thrive in their chosen fields. For those considering a career in CTE, come join us! As a CTE educator, you can positively influence the lives of students and, indirectly, their families.

Can you share some successful strategies you have implemented to recruit faculty? And, in your opinion, what types of professional development are most effective in retaining CTE educators?

An effective approach I've utilized is tapping into the professional networks of our CTE instructors. Last school year, we hired two teachers recommended by our instructors. They served as excellent ambassadors! Regarding professional development, I firmly believe that instructional rounds are highly effective in retaining CTE educators. These sessions provide valuable opportunities for instructors to observe their CTE peers and learn from each other's teaching practices.



Katherine Kandalec Holm

Associate Professor of CTE, Athens State University

What motivated you to choose a career in career and technical education?

What advice would you give to someone making the same choice?

My passion for inspiring and equipping students with practical, career-ready skills was my primary motivation. Witnessing the transformation in students' lives as they gain the skills and confidence needed for their careers is incredibly fulfilling. If you're considering this path, stay committed to fostering strong connections between education and industry. Focus on equipping future educators with the tools they need to create impactful learning experiences and always prioritize student success.

“One of the most rewarding aspects of my role is seeing the direct impact CTE educators have on students' lives.”

Can you share some successful strategies you have implemented to recruit faculty?

Our institution has successfully partnered with local industries and education programs to identify and nurture future CTE educators. We offer clear pathways for transitioning industry professionals into teaching roles and provide robust support throughout their transition. To retain CTE educators, we emphasize ongoing professional development in emerging technologies and provide opportunities for real-world industry experiences. We also foster a collaborative environment where educators can share best practices and continuously learn from one another.

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Midpoint	
Students assessed	Number of students who showed growth
Assessment	Performance Assessment
Students assessed	Number of students who showed growth

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Techniques

CONNECTING EDUCATION AND CAREERS

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Assessment	Description
Initial Assessment (formative)	

THE

INSTRUCTIONAL ISSUE

- Small Wins, Big Impact
- Exclusive Q&A with Postsecondary CTE Leadership Fellows 
- Teaching Future Teachers
- Leveraging Local Data to Boost Student Growth
- Middle Grades Career Exploration: Out of This World!



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