

To: Chris Graillat, CEC

From: Carol Zabin and Jessie Halpern-Finnerty, UC Berkeley

Re: Comments on the Clean Energy Partnership Academy Guidelines

Date: 9/26/11

We applaud the CEC and DOE on their joint effort to develop the CEPAs to help at-risk students stay in school and access pipelines into high-wage, skilled careers in the clean and renewable energy sectors. We particularly appreciate its emphasis on combining academic and career tech education that prepares high school students for either college or further vocational training.

A lot of great thinking and input has clearly gone into crafting the Draft Guidelines so far. We appreciate the chance to voice some additional thoughts on the Guidelines and underscore some issues that we would like to see highlighted in the guidelines.

1. Underscore the importance of energy efficiency and zero net energy goals

Energy efficiency is the first in the loading order for reducing fossil fuels emissions, before renewable energy. This could be better reflected in the guidelines. One way to do this would be specifically to integrate the CPUC's Long Term Energy Efficiency Strategic Plan throughout the guidelines, in particular in the first Goal to "align programs with California's policies for a clean energy future and understand how these policies shape their programs" (p. 6). The Strategic Plan describes an integrated systems approach to achieving zero net energy building goals through energy efficiency, distributed generation, and demand response.

As was mentioned in the September 21st task force meeting, the State Energy and Environmental Education Policies and Priorities should also include the Strategic Plan (p. 9). It is a critical policy to mention here, as it describes the CPUC's guiding strategies for implementing AB32 and achieving the state's ambitious energy savings goals, such as ZNE.

2. Emphasize connecting CEPAs to the labor market

The central role of energy efficiency in the Strategic Plan and other state policy to meet AB 32 carbon emission reduction goals also has implications for the labor market, and thus for career preparation and training.

The CEPAs should be strongly informed by real labor market information. It is critically important that career training programs, even for high school students, be rooted in the reality of the labor market and the local demand for workers. Our study, the California WE&T Needs Assessment, shows that there is little demand for niche, green-specialty training that is not connected to a broader occupation. In the energy efficiency and distributed generation sectors, 2/3 of the jobs are in the construction trades, 1/3 are in related professional occupations like architect, engineer, construction management, and only 2% are in green-specialty professions.

Based on these findings, we suggest that basic career and technical education for green jobs be rooted in foundational skills for traditional occupations in the construction and mechanical trades, as well as architects and engineers. Goal 2 makes note of the need to tailor the CEPAs to a highly-skilled, high-wage careers (p. 7), but the explanation focuses on "specialized" training for green, which is less relevant than basic construction or building science for the green jobs of the future, based on our study.

The CEPA should focus on the basic soft and hard skills students will need to succeed in a variety of high-quality careers, rather than focusing on “niche” green jobs that don’t lead to a long term career or high-skills, high-wage work.

3. Support partnerships that build a strong pipeline into good careers

The Draft Guidelines describe the importance of partnering with other career training programs in Goal 4 (p.8), but we think that this could be more explicit. Although they are not typically performing a job placement function, the CEPAs do have responsibility for informing students about career opportunities and helping them access further training and employment.

Career development should emphasize relationships with employers who can offer high quality career and training pathways, and define in clear terms what this looks like. Some of these businesses may not “focus” on energy efficiency or clean energy; instead they may be traditional construction firms that consider energy efficiency an integral part of their work (p. 20). These types of employers should not be excluded from CEPA because they are not solely focused or branded around clean energy.

The state-certified apprenticeship system is one example of how training can connect with employers and provide a real career pathway. The guidelines do mention connections with labor and pre-apprenticeship programs, but the guidelines should spell out more clearly the features of a good pre-apprenticeship are, looking to the Power Pathways Guidelines, the building trades’ Multi-Craft Core curriculum or the DOL’s efforts to standardize pre-apprenticeships and ensure that they are in fact aligned with apprenticeships. Not all pre-apprenticeships are created equal, and the CEPA guidelines should offer greater clarity on what quality pre-apprenticeship training looks like and how the Academies can align with them and help students begin to choose the right craft for them.

For students bound for professional careers like architect, engineer, or construction manager, the 4-year college pathway is necessary and often a 2-year degree isn’t sufficient, so linking to community college transfer paths is very important. The same applies to community college programs leading into the construction trades, which should also be aligned with apprenticeship skills training or designated as pre-apprenticeship programs.

4. Provide clarity on how certifications and credentials help advance students in their careers

Like pre-apprenticeship programs, not all credentials are created equal. The guidelines should offer greater detail on what skills different certifications signify, and how their values may differ in the labor market in terms of career pathways. Although it’s noted that the list of certifications (p. 22) is not exhaustive, we would encourage adding the journey cards for completion of state-certified apprenticeships in the building trades. We also suggest adding the DIR-DAS apprenticeships site to resource on relevant occupations and training for the green economy (<http://www.dir.ca.gov/DAS/das.html>).