

NATIONAL CTSO OFFICERS DISCUSS PENDING LEGISLATION WITH OVAE STAFF

In celebration of Career and Technical Education Week, a delegation from the CTSOs visited with members of the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) staff to dialogue about the impact of the student organizations on education and the future plans for Career and Technical Education at the federal level. The OVAE representatives included Dr. Richard La Pointe, OVAE Deputy Superintendent, Gail Schwartz, and Sharon Belli. The national officers shared their career goals and how CTSO involvement had developed their technical skills, strengthened their academics, and polished their leadership skills.



Copies of the *Blueprint for Preparing America's Future, The Secondary and Technical Education Act of 2003: Overview for FY 2004 Budget Release*, by Carol A. D'Amico, Assistant Secretary, OVAE were distributed and a copy is attached. Dr. La Pointe explained that legislation would be drafted from this

(L-R) Nicholas Rezny, DECA; Joel Arvizo, HOSA; Stefanie Botelho, FBLA-PBL; Katrina Harper, FCCLA; Amit Patel, BPA; Julia Abramova, SkillsUSA; Alfonso Dager, TSA; Tim Hammerich, FFA.

blueprint in March. The blueprint, supported by a study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education, reported CTE students do not function at the same level as other students. The study said that CTE students need to experience the same rigorous academics as other students. Hans Meader and Sharon Belli will represent OVAE in drafting the proposed legislation based on the theme that all students need a set of rigorous academics to eliminate the need for remediation at the postsecondary level.

When questioned, Dr. La Pointe indicated with the new legislation, Perkins Grants would no longer be available. The Perkins money would be used to fund the new program. The funding request would be decreased from the \$1.3 billion for the Perkins Grant to \$1 billion for the proposed legislation. The new act will include increased academic courses with emphasis on math and science. The reduction of \$300 million dollars means decreased funding for schools, but the expectations and accountability for schools would be increased.

The national officers expressed their concerns for a balance of academics and Career and Technical Education. They eloquently shared their CTE experiences and how fortunate that their academic preparation was blended with career and technical education coursework and CTE student organization participation. Serving as a voice for millions of CTE students and graduates, the national officers provided real examples of how students benefited from the proper balance of academics and career and technical courses in strengthening their preparation for the future.

Gail Schwartz and Sharon Belli, OVAE group leaders continued the conversation on the blueprint. Once turned into a piece of legislation, the bill will go to the Hill later this year. Their plans are that Congress will finalize the bill over the next year as OVAE monitors the debates and provides information. In their words, this "dry bill" will be made into an exciting and innovative new program. Challenges are expected for the discretionary grant process that will be used to fund education initiatives and impact student lives.

OVAE reported the focus of the new proposed program would be on research-based evidence as opposed to "what seems to work." In collecting the evidence, OVAE representatives Schwartz and Belli explained that schools must be able to show where students start and end. We were encouraged to avoid supporting evidence such as "students feel good...or students like it." There will be increased emphasis on academics with all standards connected to high academic achievement. Programs must be able to show how they feed into higher academics.

The national officers were given more time to ask questions and to express their concerns about the proposed legislation. The national officers did an outstanding job articulating support for Career and Technical Education in a professional and informed manner. The meeting adjourned for the students and CTSO representatives to walk to the Russell Building for the Webcast.