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TO: Steve Midgley, Office of Educational Technology
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FROM: James F. McKenney, Vice President, Workforce, Economic
Development & International Programs, AACC

RE: Assessment Technology Standards Request for Information
(RFI)

DATE: January 13, 2011

Introduction: The Education Department has issued an RFI which is seeking information on technology standards that may be applied to the management and delivery of education-related assessments, as well as those that may be applied to the capture and reporting of assessment results within distributed online learning environments. As a component of its Request For Information, the Department posited a series of questions including: How can technology standards accurately link individual learners, their assessment results, the systems where they take their assessments, and the systems where they view their results? How do technology standards enable assessment results for individual learners to be kept private, especially as assessments results are transferred across numerous, distinct learning systems? How can such results best be shared securely over a distributed set of systems managed by independent organizations that are authorized to receive the data, while still maintaining privacy from unauthorized access?

Our comments on these specific issues are offered below.

Background: The American Association of Community Colleges (AACCC) was awarded a grant from the US Department of Labor in July 2010 to build and operate a Healthcare Virtual Careers Platform (HVCP). The purpose of this platform is to assist individuals (including students, the unemployed and under-employed) to learn about healthcare careers, to find, qualify for, and enroll in education or training leading to a recognized healthcare credential, and using that credential to locate and secure employment in the healthcare sector. The HVCP is being built as an open source, open content platform. All of the tools, assessments, user interfaces, labor market information, experiential materials about healthcare careers, remedial training courses, and other resource materials will be available for use by other systems and other platforms. While initially focusing on healthcare, the platform is being built robust enough to expand easily to cover other occupations or clusters. (The Department of Labor

has stated its intention to use the platform as the foundation for ultimately covering all occupations.) Its e-learning delivery system will be SCORM-compliant (Shareable Content Object Reference Model), and therefore able to run any course that complies with those specifications regardless of the software or platform used in its development. (The Department of Labor has indicated its intention to require all curriculum developed through future grants be automatically included in the platform's e-learning registry or repository.)

One unique component of the HVCP, which we believe is the most critical and a key to its success, is the capability of the user to create, hold, and maintain over time a personal portfolio we call the Career Management Account (CMA). The CMA will enable individuals to explore careers in the allied healthcare fields. The Career Management Account serves as an Internet-based "safety deposit box" where individuals can collect, manage, and store in a single place all of their career information, including third party validated records and credentials.

The Career Management Account offers a number of features and benefits to individuals, employers, and learning institutions:

- Individuals, not institutions, own and control all of their records and information.
- Each Career Management Account contains an electronic portfolio that allows individuals to easily store, organize, retrieve, and display information.
- The variety of information contained in an electronic portfolio is virtually unlimited. This information may include work samples, resumes, test scores, individual development plans, videos, audio recordings, digitized paintings, validated records, credentials, *etc.*
- The Career Management Account allows individuals a means to store and share validated records and credentials with potential employers, educational institutions, counselors, and other organizations or individuals safely and securely. These records and credentials may include transcripts, licenses, competency certificates, degrees, and the results of standardized tests or other assessments. The CMA provides tamper detection and non-repudiation safeguards to ensure that such records cannot be altered by the individual.
- The Career Management Account allows employers, learning institutions, and military organizations to make faster decisions about hiring, deploying individuals with special skills, admitting someone into a college, or certifying that an individual has particular knowledge and expertise.
- The Career Management Account provides each account holder with a digital certificate that authenticates that individual's identity and protects the privacy of information contained in the account.
- By consolidating personal learning and career information in a single location, under their control, the Career Management Account provides individuals with the ability to easily track, plan, and manage their careers, avoiding them a greater sense of confidence and control over their future.

Comments: We recommend that the Education Department add a request in the final SGA that responders include provision for an Application Program Interface (API) in their system architecture or proposed standards structure that will permit individuals to store assessment results within their CMA portfolios. By ensuring that such API's are developed and maintained, the Department of Education will be both assisting individuals who seek career advancement and meeting the key objectives of RTTP.

We would further recommend that, to the extent possible, the high school level assessments be made available through the Department of Labor's virtual career platforms so that they can be used by individuals who need to test their readiness to pursue a particular course of study (*e.g.*, determining whether an individual has the math and science knowledge and skill to pursue a technical program at a community college).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James P. McKenney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

James McKenney
V.P., Economic Development & International Programs
American Association of Community Colleges