

three years of acquiring the general education certificate, so, for most postsecondary students, college will be free. These professional and technical degree programs will be designed to link to programs leading to the baccalaureate degree and higher degrees. There will be no dead ends in this system. Everyone who meets the general education standard will be able to go to some form of college, being able to borrow all the money they need to do so, beyond the first free year.

This idea of post-secondary professional and technical certificates captures all of the essentials of the apprenticeship idea, while offering none of its drawbacks (see below).

But it also makes it clear that those engaged in apprentice-style programs are getting more than narrow training; they are continuing their education for other purposes as well, and building a base for more education later. Clearly, this idea redefines college. Proprietary schools, employers and community-based organizations will want to offer these programs, as well as community colleges and four-year institutions, but these new entrants will have to be accredited if they are to qualify to offer the programs.

Employers are not required to provide slots for the structured on-the-job training component of the program but many do so, because they get first access to the most accomplished graduates of these programs, and they can use these programs to introduce the trainees to their own values and way of doing things.

The system of skill standards for technical and professional degrees is the same for students just coming out of high school and for adults in the workforce. It is progressive, in the sense that certificates and degrees for entry level jobs lead to further professional and technical education programs at higher levels. Just as in the case of the system for the schools, though the standards are the same everywhere (leading to maximum mobility for students), the curricula can vary widely and programs can be custom designed to fit the needs of full-time and part-time students with very different requirements. Government grant and loan programs are available on the same terms to full-time and part-time students, as long as the programs in which they are enrolled are designed to lead to certificates and degrees defined by the system of professional and technical standards.

The national system of professional and technical standards is designed much like the multistate bar, which provides a national core around which the states can specify additional standards that meet their unique needs. There are national standards and exams for no more than 20 broad occupational areas, each of which can lead to many occupations in a number of related industries. Students who qualify in any one of these areas have the broad skills required by a whole family of occupations, and most are sufficiently skilled to enter the workforce immediately, with further occupation-specific skills provided by their union or employer. Industry and occupational groups can voluntarily create standards building on these broad standards for their own needs, as can the states. Students entering the system are first introduced to very broad occupational groups, narrowing over time to concentrate on acquiring the skills needed for a cluster of occupations. This modular system provides for the initiative of particular states and industries while at the same time providing for mobility across states and occupations by reducing the time and cost entailed in moving from one occupation to another. In this way, a balance is established between the kinds of generic skills needed to function effectively in high performance

work organizations and the skills needed to continue learning quickly and well through a lifetime of work, on the one hand, and the specific skills needed to perform at a high level in a particular occupation on the other.

Institutions receiving grant and loan funds under this system are required to provide information to the public and to government agencies in a uniform format. This information covers enrollment by program, costs and success rates for students of different backgrounds, and characteristics, and career outcomes for those students, thereby enabling students to make informed choices among institutions based on cost and performance. Loan defaults are reduced to a level close to zero, both because programs that do not deliver what they promise are not selected by prospective students and because the new postsecondary loan system uses the IRS to collect what is owed from salaries and wages as they are earned.

#### EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR EMPLOYED AND UNEMPLOYED ADULTS

The national system of skills standards establishes the basis for the development of a coherent, unified training system. That system can be accessed by students coming out of high school, employed adults who want to improve their prospects, unemployed adults who are dislocated and others who lack the basic skills required to get out of poverty. But it is all the same system. There are no longer any parts of it that are exclusively for the disadvantaged, though special measures are taken to make sure that the disadvantaged are served. It is a system for everyone, just as all the parts of the system already described are for everyone. So the people who take advantage of this system are not marked by it as "damaged goods." The skills they acquire are world class, clear and defined in part by the employers who will make decisions about hiring and advancement.

The new general education standard becomes the target for all basic education programs, both for school dropouts and adults. Achieving that standard is the prerequisite for enrollment in all professional and technical degree programs. A wide range of agencies and institutions offer programs leading to the general education certificate, including high schools, dropout recovery centers, adult education centers, community colleges, prisons, and employers. These programs are tailored to the needs of the people who enroll in them. All the programs receiving government grant or loan funds that come with dropouts and adults for enrollment in programs preparing students to meet the general education standard must release the same kind of data required of the postsecondary institutions on enrollment, program description, cost and success rates. Reports are produced for each institution and for the system as a whole showing differential success rates for each major demographic group.

The system is funded in four different ways, all providing access to the same or a similar set of services. School dropouts below the age of 21 are entitled to the same amount of funding from the same sources that they would have been entitled to had they stayed in school. Dislocated workers are funded by the federal government through the federal programs for that purpose and by state unemployment insurance funds. The chronically unemployed are funded by federal and state funds established for that purpose. Employed people can access the system through the requirement that their employers spend an amount equal to 1½ percent of their salary and wage bill on training leading to national skill certification. People in prison could get reductions

in their sentences by meeting the general education standard in a program provided by the prison system. Any of these groups can also use the funds in their individual training account, if they have any, the balances in their grant entitlement or their access to the student loan fund.

#### LABOR MARKET SYSTEMS

The Employment Service is greatly upgraded and separated from the Unemployment Insurance Fund. All available frontline jobs—whether public or private—must be listed in it by law. This provision must be carefully designed to make sure that employers will not be subject to employment suits based on the data produced by this system—if they are subject to such suits, they will not participate. All trainees in the system looking for work are entitled to be listed in it without a fee. So it is no longer a system just for the poor and unskilled, but for everyone. The system is fully computerized. It lists not only job openings and job seekers (with their qualifications) but also all the institutions in the labor market area offering programs leading to the general education certificate and those offering programs leading to the professional and technical college degrees and certificates, along with all the relevant data about the costs, characteristics and performance of those programs—for everyone and for special populations. Counselors are available to any citizen to help them assess their needs, plan a program, and finance it, and once they are trained, to find an opening.

A system of labor market boards is established at the local, state and federal levels to coordinate the systems for job training, postsecondary professional and technical education, adult basic education, job matching and counseling. The rebuilt Employment Service is supervised by these boards. The system's clients no longer have to go from agency to agency filling out separate applications for separate programs. It is all taken care of at the local labor market board office by one counselor accessing the integrated computer-based program, which makes it possible for the counselor to determine eligibility for all relevant programs at once, plan a program with the client and assemble the necessary funding from all the available sources. The same system will enable counselor and client to array all the relevant program providers side by side, assess their relative costs and performance records and determine which providers are best able to meet the client's needs based on performance.

#### SOME COMMON FEATURES

Throughout, the object is to have a performance-and-client-oriented system to encourage local creativity and responsibility by getting local people to commit to high goals and organize to achieve them, sweeping away as much of the rules, regulations and bureaucracy that are in their way as possible, provided that they are making real progress against their goals. For this to work, the standards at every level of the system have to be clear: every client has to know what they have to accomplish in order to get what they want out of the system. The service providers have to be supported in the task of getting their clients to the finish line and rewarded when they are making real progress toward that goal. We would sweep away means-tested programs, because they stigmatize their recipients and alienate the public, replacing them with programs that are for everyone, but also work for the disadvantaged. We would replace rules defining inputs with rules defining outcomes and the rewards for achieving them. This means, among other things, permitting local people to combine as many federal programs as