

## **PRI Recommendations Enacted in 2016 Legislative Session**

**Report Topic: Department of Veterans' Affairs: Office of Advocacy and Assistance** (study completed December 2015): A number of PRI recommendations were included in Public Act 16-68 (Sec. 2), as listed below.

### **■ To Enhance Outreach to Veterans and Families**

- Requires DVA Office of Advocacy and Assistance (OAA) to conduct a training course at least twice a year (instead of once) for municipal veterans' service contact representatives, and specifies certain topics the course must include.
- Requires OAA to develop, and update as necessary, a written outreach plan to identify: 1) strategies for conducting outreach to veterans and their family members in order to provide claims assistance and 2) specific events and opportunities for OAA to sponsor or participate in, to provide claims assistance.
- Specifies that the OAA manager and district veterans' services officers must electronically track information relating to their outreach activities, including the type of event and numbers of veterans to whom substantive services or referrals were provided.

### **■ To Reach Veterans in Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Facilities**

- Requires the state's nursing homes and assisted living facilities to electronically notify OAA twice a year (beginning April 1, 2017) of any new resident who is a veteran or a veteran's family member (if the veteran gives his or her consent), and about any veterans' service or benefit the resident is receiving or entitled to receive.
- Using the above notifications, OAA required to develop an annual schedule for each of its veterans' services officers to visit nursing homes and assisted living facilities throughout the state, and any information collected from such visits must be compiled and reported quarterly to the DVA Board of Trustees.

### **■ To Keep DVA Board of Trustees Informed About Veterans' Concerns or Petitions**

- Requires OAA to provide quarterly reports to the department's Board of Trustees on concerns raised by veterans or their family members and petitions filed by veterans or their family members received by the DVA commissioner as required under state regulation.

**Report Topic: Apprenticeship Programs and Workforce Needs** (study completed December 2015): A number of PRI recommendations were included in Public Act 16-114 (Sec. 2), as listed below:

### **■ To Simplify, Update, and Correct DOL's Website Referring to Its Apprenticeship Programs To Enhance the Use of These Programs and Lead to Employment**

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- By March 1, 2017, the Labor Department is required to update the department's website pertaining to the office of apprenticeship training. The update must include, but is not limited to:
  - Simplification of the process by which current and prospective apprentices and employers may access comprehensive information relating to apprenticeship training on the department's website;
  - An accurate list of occupations in which apprentices are employed in the state and the number of apprentices participating in each occupation within the previous calendar year; and
  - Comprehensive information regarding apprenticeship coursework, including, but not limited to, a list of apprenticeship coursework providers, the website addresses for such apprenticeship coursework providers, the locations of such apprenticeship coursework providers, the occupations in which such apprenticeship coursework providers offer apprenticeship coursework and the costs associated with such apprenticeship coursework, which shall be accompanied by a disclaimer that cost information is only one factor to be considered in selecting coursework. The department may provide electronic links to such information.
- The department must update the information described in the last two sub-bullets above as often as practicable, but not less than annually, to improve the efficiency by which current and prospective apprentices and employers may engage in apprenticeships in the state.
- By March 31, 2017, the department must submit a report to the Labor Committee and the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee on the update to the department's website.

**Report Topic: Higher Education Certificate Programs** (study completed in December 2014): A number of PRI recommendations were included in Public Act 16-44, as listed below (with some administrative changes such as dates).

### **To Promote Consistency and Better Information for Consumers of Higher Education Certificate Programs**

- Each institution of higher education and private occupational school in the state must submit data for the prior academic year to the Office of Higher Education, in a uniform format prescribed by said office, regarding its for-credit sub-baccalaureate programs and the types of for-credit certificates it offers by January 1, 2018, and annually thereafter, and regarding its noncredit sub-baccalaureate certificate programs and the types of noncredit certificates it offers by January 1, 2019, and annually thereafter. The data shall include, but need not be limited to, the following for each sub-baccalaureate certificate program:
  - Name and subject matter area of such program;
  - Total enrollment in such program;
  - Any entry-level requirements for enrollment in such program;
  - Number and type of certificates awarded by such program;

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- Tuition and fees charged for completion of such program in the time period prescribed by such program;
- Estimated range of costs relating to the purchase of books and supplies, unless such costs are included as part of the tuition and fees of such institution or school for such program;
- Median loan debt incurred by students who complete such program, to the extent such information has been reported to the financial aid office of the institution of higher education or private occupational school offering such program, separately by Title IV loans and other education debt, including private and institutional loans;
- Basic demographic information, to the extent available, of the students enrolled in such program, including, but not limited to, gender, age, race and ethnicity;
- Percentage of students in each student cohort who completed such program in the time period prescribed by such program;
- Whether there is a clear pathway from successful completion of such program to enrollment in a related associate degree program;
- Whether such program leads to a credential recognized by the industry for which such program prepares a student;
- Whether a student may combine the certificate awarded upon successful completion of such program with any other certificate awarded upon the successful completion of another sub-baccalaureate certificate program in order to achieve a heightened level of qualification for a particular trade or occupation;
- Average length of time to complete such program;
- Employment rates, to the extent available, for students who have completed such program at six months after completion of such program;
- Student cohort pass rate, to the extent available, for national certification programs; and
- Student cohort licensure rate, to the extent available, for positions requiring the certificate and state licensure.
- The Office of Higher Education shall collect for each sub-baccalaureate certificate program offered by an institution of higher education or private occupational school in the state
  - the average starting salary for entry-level positions requiring the certificate, and
  - the average salary for jobs requiring the certificate, based on available Labor Department statistics, for each for-credit program, by January 1, 2018, and annually thereafter, and for each noncredit program, by January 1, 2019, and annually thereafter.
- By January 1, 2020, and annually thereafter, the Office of Higher Education shall compile the data submitted per the first bullet above and collected per the second bullet above for purposes of comparing the sub-baccalaureate certificate programs offered by the institutions of higher education and private occupational schools and determining (1) which programs are similar to other programs, (2) student interest in each program and similar programs, and (3) the necessity of offering each program. By July 1, 2020, and annually thereafter, said office shall make such data available on its Internet web site for the purpose of enabling a student or prospective student to make an informed decision

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about whether to enroll in a sub-baccalaureate certificate program and, if so, which program is the best fit for such student.

- By July 1, 2019, and annually thereafter, the Office of Higher Education shall develop and post on its Internet web site a one-page fact sheet for each sub-baccalaureate certificate program offered by each institution of higher education and private occupational school in the state. Such fact sheet shall contain data submitted and collected per the first three bullets above, including, but not limited to, tuition, fees, costs of books and supplies, graduation and, to the extent available, job placement rates and average student debt. No later than seven days after the office posts the fact sheet on its Internet web site, and annually thereafter, each institution of higher education and private occupational school shall make such fact sheet available to its current and prospective students by means, including, but not limited to, posting such fact sheet on its Internet web site.
- The Board of Regents for Higher Education, under the direction of its chief academic officer, shall establish a working group comprised of deans of continuing education programs, or their designees, at the regional community-technical colleges to review all of the noncredit sub-baccalaureate certificate programs offered by each regional community-technical college for purposes of designing a uniform naming convention for such programs. By January 1, 2019, the working group shall design the uniform naming convention to enable students to distinguish between noncredit certificate programs with similar yet varied requirements within the same field of study. Any programs that vary shall be uniformly designated with indications of different, enhanced or more demanding requirements.
- By February 1, 2019, and periodically thereafter as prescribed by the Board of Regents for Higher Education, the working group shall review the tuition of uniformly named noncredit sub-baccalaureate certificate programs leading to the same qualifications to determine if any cost variations in the tuition and fees for such program are reasonable.
- By March 1, 2019, the president of the Board of Regents for Higher Education shall report to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to higher education regarding the uniform naming convention and the tuition review referred to above.
- By July 1, 2019, the Office of Higher Education shall develop a program to annually review not less than a sample of student data from all for-credit and noncredit sub-baccalaureate certificate programs offered by the institutions of higher education and the private occupational schools. Said office shall not disclose any personally identifiable information of any student obtained as a result of performing the annual review.