It was no accident or spontaneous coincidence that the College of Agriculture has innovated to include Applied Science in name, learning mission, and program design. The college’s expanded transformation has embraced Career and Technical Education (CTE) to meet workforce needs, provide inclusive access, and impact economic development in Utah, especially rural communities. The past two decades of secondary-level public education has wrestled with headlines grabbing debates about the Common Core and No Child Left Behind legislation. Simmering slowly but advancing with subtle leadership at the local, state, and federal level, CTE has been intensifying in the public schools, including post-secondary institutions. Some will argue that the growth of CTE reflects the advent of something new, while others, old timers like me, see it as the reformation of 1960-70s vocational education. Growth is happening at the student level with a 22% increase in enrollment in the past 10 years (American Enterprise Institute Report). And in the political arena, CTE was the single education issue supported by a majority of gubernatorial candidates in 2018 (American Enterprise Institute Report*). Regardless of the labels used to categorize academic training for workforce success, the emphasis on technical education is well placed in the College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences.

Today’s CTE, as organized and lead in the College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences, has improved beyond the one-dimensional routes to only low-tech work of the past. CTE is high tech and an essential part of secondary and post-secondary’s call for college and career-ready students. In Utah, CTE pathways are well charted for high school students seeking career stability but also wanting to continue their education. The concept of “stackability” has taken hold at USU as students can complete business and industry-regulated credentials or licensures that can be then be applied if and when they seek further education at the Associates or Bachelor’s degree level. Seamless transitions for continuing education has opened a new pipeline of career focused learners who know that the key to success is life-long learning.

Recently, school leaders and state higher education visionaries have launched the next generation of career and technical initiatives that prepare students for expanding workforce needs at the “less than a baccalaureate” level. USU and the College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences has reinvented technical education the past two years with more than 25 certificate programs – many unique to rural Utah, the home court for Utah State University. Innovative programs to meet local workforce needs has revitalized many non-Wasatch Front communities with bottomless academic training while expanding educational options with greater access, affordability, and placement in high demand, high wage careers.

Career and Technical Education programs in the College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences bring a new dimension to Aggie teaching, learning, and life.

* AEI Report is found [here](#).