

# QUILL RESEARCH ASSOCIATES:

## College & Career Readiness & Success (CCRS)

The U.S. Department of Education has issued a challenge to states, school districts, colleges and universities across the nation: **By 2020, all high school graduates should be ready for and successful in college and careers.** Policymakers and educators have taken on this challenge, but many are struggling with fundamental questions:

- What does it mean to be ready for and successful in college? In careers?
- How can these terms be defined, measured, and attained?
- How can states, districts, schools, and community stakeholders align efforts to support students in the early grades, approaching graduation, and beyond?

To achieve the goals of readiness and success, educational leaders and practitioners, as well as students, parents, and even employers, need to have a solid definition of these terms—one that is **clear, actionable, and can be measured and tested.**

### Quill's Expertise

Quill Research Associates is dedicated to helping policymakers, educators, and community members answer complex questions about CCRS. Quill offers:

- Experience in all sectors of education: federal, state, local, and classroom
- Broad and deep wealth of knowledge to help you identify goals around CCRS and actionable plans for measuring and attaining those goals
- Collaboration at every step to maximize stakeholders' efforts across institutions and organizations in order to optimize student outcomes

Our goal is your goal: to help students reach their fullest potential from elementary to high school and beyond to college and career.



## DEFINE

### Create a shared understanding of terms

- Clearly state the goals and expectations students need to be successful.
- Include multiple dimensions of knowledge, skills, and experience.
- Articulate components of both college and career readiness and success.



## MEASURE

### Develop a strategy and communication plan

- Align measures to the definition.
- Develop a plan for empirical validation.
- Serve multiple purposes: identification of struggling students, and progress monitoring.
- Communicate plan and measures to broad audience and key stakeholders.



## IMPROVE

### Engage in continuous improvement cycles

- Employ a data-informed approach to incremental improvements.
- Provide ongoing, systematic, and collaborative effort.
- Develop solutions from internal expertise.
- Involve multiple levels of educational and career institutions and systems.



**Quill Research Associates**  
*Using Data and Research  
to Improve Education*

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# WHY CCRS? WHY NOW?

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In recent years, CCRS has become a key PK-12 and postsecondary education policy issue. By 2018, approximately 63 percent of job openings in the U.S. and 90 percent of jobs in high-wage growth industries will require postsecondary training.<sup>1</sup> **Researchers, educators, and policymakers are asking: Are high school graduates ready to be successful in college and careers?**

Consider these statistics:

- **Many high school graduates are not prepared for college:** Approximately one in five high school graduates who go on to college enroll in remedial coursework; the number is even larger among graduates who attend community colleges.<sup>2</sup>
- **Many college students do not complete their degrees on time:** Among the high school graduates entering a four-year institution in 2003, less than two-thirds of them completed their degree within six years. Only one-third of high school graduates who enrolled in a two-year postsecondary institution in 2006 completed their program and received an associate's or equivalent degree within three years.<sup>3</sup>
- **Many high school graduates are not adequately prepared for work, either:** Only one-third of high school graduates who went to work without a college degree reported gaps between their high school preparation and the skills and knowledge expected of them in their current job; employers of high school graduates largely concurred.<sup>4</sup>

Although CCRS is a focal policy issue, the term lacks clarity and coherence; goals and expectations for CCRS are typically not uniformly explicit, comprehensive, or shared among states, districts, and schools. But they should be. An explicit, shared definition sets a vision for what educators aim to accomplish and drives conversations around measurement and practice. States and districts are innovators in the areas of CCRS, and they seek information and expertise to guide their efforts.

## QUILL'S CCRS SERVICES INCLUDE:

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- Research and evaluation
- Policy review and analysis
- Strategic planning and goal setting
- Measurement support
- Data-driven decision-making

1 Carnevale, A.P., Smith, N. & Strohl, J. (2010). *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements through 2018*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

2 Sparks, D., & Malkus, N. (2013, January). *First-year undergraduate remedial coursetaking: 1999-2000, 2003-04, 2007-08*. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics.

3 Data were retrieved on March 5, 2015 from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems customized report of "Persistence and Completion-Graduation" for year 2009. Custom reports available from <http://www.higheredinfo.org/datamaps.php>

4 Peter D. Hart Research Associates/Public Opinion Strategies. (2005, February). *Rising to the challenge: Are high school graduates prepared for college and work? A study of recent high school graduates, college instructors, and employers*. Washington, D.C.: Author.

## ABOUT BECKY SMERDON, Ph.D.

Founder and principal of Quill Research Associates, Dr. Smerdon leads the college and career readiness (CCRS) team. As a national expert in CCRS, she has more than 15 years of experience conducting research and evaluation in education and the social sciences, publishing reports and peer-refereed articles, and managing large, complex projects funded by diverse clients. She has lent her expertise in CCRS to numerous states, including Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. Dr. Smerdon and her team can offer a unique service and process for you to define, measure, and attain the readiness and success that you desire for your students, and that they deserve.

### QRA-LLC's other areas of expertise include:

- Data use to improve student, school, and system outcomes
- System capacity-building through design and continuous improvement cycles
- Applied research and evaluation on education programs, policies, and practices