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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Industry-Based Credentials – Expanding Opportunities

November 4, Baton Rouge. A new report issued jointly by the Educational Testing Service and the American Association of Community Colleges points out the increased importance of industry-based credentials. According to the report, *Help Wanted...Credentials Required: Community Colleges in the Knowledge Economy*, in the past ten years 50 information technology (IT) vendors and professional associations conferred approximately 2.4 million certificates. "It is not just IT certifications that have increased in number," said Ann Stokes, Chair of the Governor's Workforce Commission. "Here in Louisiana, we have seen increased emphasis on credentials by the Automobile Dealers Association, the Restaurant Association and the Chemical Association, to name just a few." This mirrors the statistics contained in the national report that indicate that organizations offering certifications grew from 120 in 1965 to more than 1,600 in 1996. "For a long time, education took the lead and trained students to standards that they thought industry wanted," noted Mrs. Stokes. "Unfortunately, students were often not prepared to meet standards set by the industries. Now business and industry are developing the standards based on what they know is needed and working with education at all levels to implement programs that prepare students to meet those standards." Competencies are determined by both hands-on demonstration of skills and by testing.

During the past year, the Governor's Office of the Workforce Commission convened representatives from all the state agencies that participate in workforce training and education to form the Industry-Based Certification Council. The Council is composed of representatives of the Louisiana Board of Regents, the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, the Louisiana Departments of Economic Development, Education, Labor, Public Safety and Corrections and Social Services. "The Commission takes very seriously their role of convener," explained Mrs. Stokes. "While we are charged with the responsibility of coordinating all the workforce education and training programs in the state to better meet employers' needs, we are also realistic and know that it must be a cooperative approach." The Workforce Commission adopted as one of its priorities the implementation of industry-based certification programs in

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Louisiana secondary and post-secondary institutions. The IBC Council, as it is known, began meeting with representatives of the National Skills Standards Board last spring to adopt six new certifications for emphasis. “While we would like to implement every program that carries an industry-based certification, we know that is not realistic,” said Mrs. Stokes. “As a result, the IBC Council plans to highlight a few new certifications each year that represent occupations most in demand and correspond to the Department of Economic Development’s Vision 2020.” Each of the agency partners pledges cooperation to move forward with the certifications for that year. The certifications that are highlighted this year are those approved by the American Welding Association, the Child Development Associate (Council for Professional Recognition), CompTIA’s A+, Prosofttraining’s Web Design and Development (CIW), Nivo International’s MOUS (Desktop Applications) and Cisco’s Certified Network Associate (CCNA).

“We think we are moving Louisiana in the right direction,” explained Mrs. Stokes. “According to the national report, more than 630,000 certificates a year are issued by post-secondary institutions and we know that here in Louisiana, studies show that most of the jobs in demand require more than a high school degree, but not necessarily a four year degree. These certificates mean that we can keep employers here who need a well-trained workforce while at the same time, we can recruit new employers with a promise that we can train workers who will have the skills to meet their industry standards.”

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