

FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCES



People-Centered Sciences

Rationale for Establishing a Family and Consumer Sciences Career Cluster

Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) is a diverse and vital field that plays a crucial role in preparing students for real-world challenges across a variety of workplace settings. FCS utilizes research, experiential education, and technology to teach students the essential knowledge and skills to:

- lead better lives,
- be work and career-ready,
- build strong families, and
- make meaningful contributions to our communities.

FCS consistently faces the challenges of being a broad field of study focused on the science of work-life balance in our complex world. Currently, FCS content spans a variety of career clusters; however, we believe that due to the multifaceted nature of FCS, its impact on various industries, and the role of FCS in equipping students with essential employability and life skills foundational to all clusters, FCS should stand as its own cluster as shown below. FCS is a dynamic field that is recognized by the Bureau of Labor and Statics and the US Department of Education through the National Center for Educational Statistics Classification of Instruction (CIP) program codes, along with School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED) coding. Most importantly, FCS contributes significantly to personal, academic, and professional success and should not be relegated to inclusion in several clusters but instead called out as its own singular cluster.

As discussed in the [CTE Without Limits](#) work completed by Advance CTE, CTE must, as it has always done, continue to evolve to meet both the emerging and long-standing challenges our country faces. FCS continually emerges as a leader in this space as it is the only content within public schools that is dedicated to improving the lives of individuals and families by equipping them with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Family and Consumer Sciences Cluster

Community Services
Counseling and Mental Health
Culinary Arts
Hospitality, and Event Management
Education
Early Childhood Education
Fashion Design and Merchandising
Food Science and Human Nutrition
Gerontology and Elder Services
Health Management and Wellness
Housing and Interior Design
Human and Child Development
Human Sciences and Community Wellbeing
Individual, Family and Social Services
Personal and Family Finance, and Consumerism
Textile Sciences



The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) recognizes the importance of a wide range of CTE programs that prepare students for careers in various industries, including human services, healthcare, education, culinary arts, and hospitality, which often fall under the umbrella of FCS. The law emphasizes the need for high-quality CTE programs that align with the labor market demands and provide students with the skills and knowledge necessary for successful careers. Perkins V specifically states:

(5) plan and carry out elements that support the implementation of career and technical education programs and programs of study and that result in increasing student achievement of the local levels of performance established under section 113, which may include--

(A) a curriculum aligned with the requirements for a program of study...

(L) supporting the integration of employability skills into career and technical education programs and programs of study, including through family and consumer science programs...

(Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act, H.R. 2353, 115th Cong. (2018) <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/2353/text>)

Given the integration of equity practices and paradigms across CTE through deliberate collaborations with the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE), it makes sense at this point in both the history and future of CTE, that the National Career Cluster Framework reflect all disciplinary contributions to CTE, including those from FCS. Since the inception of the Smith Hughes Vocational Education Act (1917), FCS has continually fought for the role of women in the workforce and for feminized careers that have yet to experience pay-equity, some of which are noted in the table below (Hillison, 1995). Perkins V specifically calls on states and local education associations to identify, examine, and address equity gaps in programs of study aligned to business and industry needs. One of the five 'non-negotiables' in *Advanced CTE's Without Limits: A Shared Vision for the Future of Career Technical Education* (2021), is a commitment to "all dimensions of equity, including educational, racial, socioeconomic, gender, and geographic, and meeting the unique needs of each individual learner." Career Pathways & Clusters should not diminish those careers that are in high need, but may not start as a high wage career.

Family Stages and Related FCS Careers		
Child Bearing/Rearing	Launching/Empty Nest	Senior Families
Nannies	Geriatric Services, Personal Service Workers	
Preschool Teachers	Residential Advisors	
Early Childhood Services	Life Coach	
FCS Education		
Credit Counseling, Personal Shoppers, Cosmetologists, Seamstress, Cooks		
Social Workers, Rehabilitation Counselors, Social and Human Service Assistants		
FCS Extension		
Mental Health, Clinical & Counseling Psychologists, Family/Marriage Therapy		

Key Talking Points

- **Interdisciplinary Nature:** FCS integrates knowledge from multiple disciplines, including science, art, math, economics, health, psychology, and sociology. This interdisciplinary approach through experiential learning prepares students to tackle complex challenges, balance diverse academic and real-world content, connect theory to practice and navigate ethical dilemmas, and work in people-centered careers. Students learn a variety of skills like communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, and financial and time management, which are universally applicable and essential for career success. These experiences enhance intra-curricular integration of the Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO), Family Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA).
- **Growing Demand:** Many FCS-related professions are experiencing growth and demand in the job market, many of which are not captured in today's siloed career clusters. Providing a Family and Consumer Sciences career cluster highlights the need for specialized education in these areas. Across the US, FCS is recognized by licensing agencies like Departments of Education or Boards for Educational Examiners.
 - **Resource:** [FCS Framework Overview](#) [Designing for People](#) [Feeding the American Economy](#) [The Workforce Behind the Workforce](#)
- **Holistic Skill Development:** FCS encompasses a wide range of foundational practical skills ([Developmental Assets](#)), including nutrition, child development, consumer personal finance, housing, food preparation, personal services, social and emotional wellness, and more. These skills contribute to students' overall personal development but are also foundational to related careers that are built upon the need to meet the needs of people, including dietetics, childcare/early childhood education, consumer/credit counseling, counseling/mental health, interior design, apparel and textiles, nutrition sciences, culinary arts as well as blended fields which are currently missing in the Advancing the National Career Clusters Framework including life coach, apparel, textiles, and career fields who meet the needs of personal and family life.
 - **Resource:** [Developmental Assets](#)
- **Career Diversity:** FCS offers diverse career opportunities, from culinary arts and hospitality management to fashion design and family services. These careers are linked together as they are addressing basic needs of the individual and are connected with an integrative skill set. Recognizing FCS as its own career cluster highlights the breadth of professions students can pursue and the post-secondary programs which provide instruction past high school, including degrees labeled "Family and Consumer Sciences." FCS aligns with industries that directly impact people's lives, including:
 - Counseling and mental health
 - Culinary arts, hospitality, and event management
 - Education and early childhood education
 - Food science, preparation and human nutrition

- Gerontology and elder services
 - Health management and wellness
 - Housing and interior design
 - Human/child development and family services
 - Organizational specialist/life coach, lifestyle management
 - Personal and family finance, and consumerism
 - Textile sciences and fashion design
 - Human sciences and community wellbeing
- **Employability Skills for Success:** FCS education equips individuals with a broad set of life skills that are directly transferable to the workplace. These skills enhance employability by making individuals more adaptable, capable, and well-rounded candidates in the job market.
 - **Resource:** [Life Skills vs. Soft Skills vs. Career Skills vs. Employability Skills — What Are the Differences?](#)
 - **Industry Relevance:** FCS aligns with industries that fall between the commonly recognized career titles that directly impact people's lives, including healthcare, hospitality, education, apparel/interior design, and social services. Categorizing FCS as a separate career cluster highlights its direct relevance to the fields we already have relationships with and know us as “Family and Consumer Sciences.” Due to its focus on employability and life skills, human development, and well-being, FCS aligns with the following:
 - **Healthcare:** FCS professionals understand the prevention component of health, therefore understand the work in healthcare settings, providing nutrition counseling, managing dietary programs, and contributing to patient wellness. They may also work in public health initiatives.
 - **Education:** FCS educators teach skills to explore and prepare for fields in education including early childhood education settings, elementary education, middle and high school educators, as well as administrative and support fields for educational settings. Collectively, a career in education is foundationally based in understanding of child development, parent/child relationships and meeting the individualized physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs of students.
 - **Culinary and Food Services:** FCS graduates can pursue culinary arts, restaurant management, food science, and food service careers. They may work as chefs, food product developers, dietitians, or food service managers.
 - **Fashion and Apparel:** FCS graduates focusing on fashion and textiles can enter the fashion industry, working in the career fields of fashion design, merchandising, retail management, and sustainable fashion.
 - **Resource:** [AFFOA Partners with National FCS Leaders NASA and Advanced Functional Fabrics of America \(AFFOA\) publicly recognized integrative skill sets developed in FCS as unique and vital to their present and future workforce needs.](#)

- **Interior Design and Home Décor:** FCS graduates can pursue careers in interior design and home décor industry, working as interior designers, aging-in-place planners, decorators, and home stagers to meet the individualized living space needs of clients and their families.
- **Social Services:** FCS graduates can further pursue careers in social service agencies, providing family counseling, adoption services, and support for individuals and families facing challenges.
- **Financial Services:** FCS graduates with a background in personal finance can work in financial planning, counseling, and advising roles, helping individuals and families manage their finances effectively.
- **Nonprofit and Community Organizations:** FCS graduates can work in nonprofit and community organizations to address issues related to food security, family support, and community development.
- **Childcare and Early Childhood Education:** FCS graduates specializing in child development can pursue careers in childcare centers, preschools, and early childhood education programs.
- **Hospitality and Tourism:** FCS graduates with expertise in hospitality management can work in hotels, resorts, event planning, and tourism-related businesses.
- **Agriculture and Food Production:** FCS professionals can work in food processing, research and extension services, and food safety and quality control.
- **Research and Academia:** FCS graduates can enter the field of research and academia, contributing to developing knowledge in areas such as nutrition, family dynamics, and consumer behavior.
- **Government and Public Policy:** FCS professionals can shape public policy related to family and consumer issues, such as geriatric services, nutrition guidelines, child welfare, and consumer protection.
- **Entrepreneurship:** FCS graduates with a passion for entrepreneurship can start their own business in fields related to FCS, such as catering, event planning, fashion/interior design, or personal finance consulting.
- **Elderly Care and Gerontology:** FCS professionals can work in settings that cater to the needs of the elderly population, including assisted living facilities, senior centers, and organizations focused on senior well-being.

The above list illustrates the fact that FCS is a versatile field that prepares individuals with practical skills and knowledge applicable to various industries and sectors, making it relevant and valuable in today's diverse job market. Many of the fields listed are suffering from a workforce shortage which indicates the necessity to focus on preparing today's students to prepare to meet these workforce needs today and tomorrow.

- **Career and Technical Student Organization:** A successful employee is best served through a well-rounded education that provides opportunities to both explore and prepare for success in this changing work environment. Through FCCLA integration, FCS provides resources for students and should be recognized for this work by showcasing it as its own Career Cluster.



- **Resource:** [FCCLA Career Pathways](#)
[FCCLA 21st Century Workforce](#)

- **Promotes Well-being:** FCS education promotes health and well-being, teaching students concepts considered prevention education in nature, including nutrition, wellness, and mental health. These skills are essential for a thriving workforce and society, but they also impact the bottom line of all businesses and industries, as the workforce consists of people who are parents and family members. If they are healthier, costs of medical-related loss of productivity and work hours are also decreased.
 - **Resource:** [UK FCS Extension](#) [Career Ready Practices FCS at the Center of CTE](#)
- **Focuses on Family and Community:** FCS emphasizes the importance of strong families and communities, requiring skills that cross multiple industries and involve capacity building. A separate cluster recognizes the unique contribution of FCS in fostering social and emotional well-being of individuals, families, and the communities they live within. This critical piece is missing from the present career cluster model.
- **Empowers Students:** FCS empowers students to make informed decisions about their personal and family lives, careers, and finances. Recognizing FCS as a distinct career cluster reinforces the importance of this empowerment.
- **Cultivates Future Leaders:** FCS programs nurture leadership skills, fostering a new generation of leaders who understand the complexities of modern society. In partnership with Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), students have opportunities to network, advocate, be involved in community service, learn additional goal-setting and decision-making skills, and public speaking/communication. FCS and FCCLA are interdependent to provide high-quality CTE as evidenced by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V).
- **Supports Diversity and Inclusion:** FCS embraces diversity by addressing the needs of diverse populations and promoting cultural awareness through health and well-being, nutrition, wellness, and mental health, which when combined, foster social and emotional well-being for strong families, workplaces, and communities. These skills are essential for a thriving workforce and society. A separate career cluster can highlight these inclusivity efforts.
 - **Resource:** [Equity in CTE & STEM Root Causes and Strategies: A Call to Action](#)

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