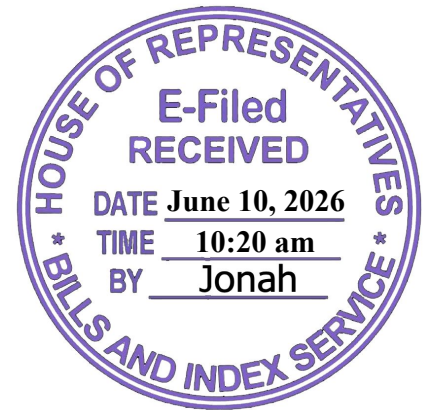




Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. 9845

**Introduced by Representatives Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez,
Yedda Marie K. Romualdez, Andrew Julian K. Romualdez and Jude A.
Acidre**

AN ACT
INSTITUTIONALIZING THE HIGHER EDUCATION-INDUSTRY
PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK, CREATING FOR THE PURPOSE THE
TRIPARTITE COUNCIL FOR TERTIARY EDUCATION, AND
STRENGTHENING STRUCTURED COLLABORATION BETWEEN
HIGHER EDUCATION AND INDUSTRY FOR WORKFORCE
RELEVANCE, INNOVATION, AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to institutionalize a comprehensive and coherent framework for sustained collaboration between higher education institutions and industry in the Philippines, in recognition of their shared responsibility in developing a skilled, adaptive, and competitive Filipino workforce.

Despite existing policies and programs on education, training, qualifications, and workforce development, persistent challenges remain, including graduate unemployment and underemployment, job-skills mismatch, uneven regional development, and weak linkages between learning, research, innovation, and productive economic activity. These challenges underscore the need for a more systematic, structured, and institutionalized mechanism to align higher education outcomes with labor market needs and national development priorities.

The proposed measure establishes the Higher Education-Industry Partnership Framework (IHEPF) as a national coordination and governance architecture to guide regular engagement, joint planning, labor market and skills intelligence exchange, and shared accountability among higher education institutions, industry partners, and relevant government agencies. The Framework is expressly designed to function as a coordination and facilitation mechanism only and does not confer regulatory, supervisory, or enforcement powers, nor does it interfere with academic freedom, institutional autonomy, or existing quality assurance and accreditation systems.

To support the implementation and continuous refinement of the Framework, the bill creates a Tripartite Council for Tertiary Education (TCTE) composed of representatives from government, higher education, and industry. The Council shall serve as the principal national advisory, coordinating, and intelligence body, tasked with monitoring labor market and skills trends, generating and analyzing workforce and innovation intelligence, and recommending policy measures to strengthen higher education–industry alignment. The Council is consultative in nature and does not supplant or diminish the statutory mandates of existing agencies such as CHED, TESDA, DOLE, DepEd, and DTI.

The bill further provides for an Annual General Assembly to serve as a national convergence platform for dialogue, assessment, and collective learning among stakeholders, as well as the possible creation of Regional and Sectoral Advisory Boards to ensure that local and sector-specific contexts, priorities, and labor market conditions are adequately reflected in national policy discussions.

Recognizing institutional diversity and autonomy, the measure encourages—but does not mandate—higher education institutions to establish Higher Education–Industry Partnership Units to manage and coordinate engagement with industry partners in a transparent, ethical, and systematic manner.

Overall, this bill seeks to strengthen the relevance, responsiveness, and future-readiness of the Philippine tertiary education system by fostering structured, inclusive, and sustained partnerships with industry, while fully respecting academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and existing legal mandates. In doing so, it aims to enhance graduate employability, innovation capacity, and national competitiveness in support of inclusive and sustainable development.

In view of the foregoing, approval of this bill is earnestly requested.



FERDINAND MARTIN G. ROMUALDEZ



YEDDA MARIE K. ROMUALDEZ



ANDREW JULIAN K. ROMUALDEZ



JUDE A. ACIDRE



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*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines
in Congress assembled:*

SECTION 1. *Title* — This Act shall be known as the “Higher Education-Industry Partnership Framework Act.”

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy* — It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote the sustained development of a skilled, adaptive, and competitive Filipino workforce and to ensure that higher education remains relevant and responsive to national development goals.

The State recognizes the vital role of higher education institutions in producing professionals, scientists, educators, managers, engineers, health workers, and other high-level human resources necessary for economic growth, social progress, and national competitiveness. The State likewise recognizes the role of industry as a principal driver of employment, productivity, innovation, and enterprise development, and as a key stakeholder in ensuring the relevance and applicability of higher education outcomes.

Notwithstanding existing efforts, challenges such as unemployment and underemployment among graduates, job–skills mismatch, uneven regional development, and weak linkages between learning, research, innovation, and productive economic activity persist, thereby underscoring the need for closer, more systematic, and more institutionalized coordination between higher education and industry. While existing laws govern education delivery, enterprise-based education and training, qualifications frameworks, and lifelong learning, the State recognizes the need for a unified framework to guide regular engagement, joint planning, labor market and skills intelligence exchange, and shared accountability between higher education and industry in the tertiary education sector.

Accordingly, the State shall institutionalize a Higher Education-Industry Partnership Framework and shall create for this purpose a Tripartite Council for Tertiary Education to serve as the principal coordinating and advisory body to strengthen collaboration between higher education and industry, consistent with academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and existing statutory mandates.

SEC. 3. *Scope and Application* — This Act shall apply to the following:

- a. ***Public and private higher education institutions***, duly recognized by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), including state universities and colleges, local universities and colleges, and private higher education institutions offering degree and non-degree programs within the tertiary education system;
- b. ***Industry partners***, including enterprises, employer organizations, chambers of commerce, professional associations, cooperatives, industry clusters, social enterprises, and other entities engaged in economic activity, innovation, and employment generation that may contribute to or benefit from higher education industry collaboration; and
- c. ***Relevant government agencies***, including those involved in higher education, workforce development, skills formation, innovation, labor, trade, and economic planning, which shall participate within their respective mandates, functions, and areas of responsibility.

Provided, That nothing in this Act shall be construed to mandate participation by any institution, organization, or entity; alter existing accreditation, quality assurance, licensing, or regulatory requirements; impose curriculum content, academic standards, or program offerings; interfere with institutional governance or academic freedom; or confer regulatory, supervisory, or enforcement powers not otherwise provided by law.

SEC. 4. *Institutionalization of the Higher Education* — Industry Partnership Framework — There is hereby institutionalized an Higher Education-Industry Partnership Framework (IHEPF) which shall serve as the national policy, coordination,

and governance architecture for structured, sustained, and systematic collaboration between industry and higher education institutions in the tertiary education sector, with the objective of strengthening relevance, responsiveness, and alignment with national development priorities.

The Framework shall:

- a. Define the guiding principles, permissible modalities, institutional roles, responsibilities, and boundaries of industry engagement in higher education, taking into account institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and differentiated institutional missions;
- b. Institutionalize regular, structured, and sustained dialogue, joint planning, consultation, and feedback mechanisms between higher education institutions and industry partners at the national, regional, and sectoral levels;
- c. Promote shared responsibility among higher education institutions, industry partners, and relevant government agencies for graduate relevance, skills utilization, research translation, innovation uptake, and workforce readiness, consistent with national and sectoral priorities;
- d. Enable evidence-informed decision-making, planning, and policy development through the systematic generation, consolidation, and use of labor-market information, skills intelligence, graduate outcomes data, and innovation indicators relevant to the tertiary education sector; and
- e. Ensure coherence, alignment, and mutual reinforcement between higher education outcomes, workforce development objectives, innovation agendas, and national, regional, and sectoral development strategies:

Provided, That the Framework shall function solely as a coordination, facilitation, and alignment mechanism and shall not exercise regulatory, supervisory, or enforcement powers;

Provided, further, That it shall not regulate academic content, prescribe curriculum standards, confer academic or professional credentials, or interfere with the internal governance, academic decision-making, or quality assurance processes of higher education institutions;

Provided, finally, that all academic authority, including authority over curriculum design, program approval, admissions, assessment, grading, faculty appointments, and the conferral of academic degrees, shall remain vested in higher education institutions and the appropriate regulatory bodies pursuant to existing laws.

SEC. 5. Guiding Principles of the Partnership Framework — The implementation of the Higher Education–Industry Partnership Framework shall be guided by the following principles:

- a. ***Institutionalized Engagement*** – Engagement between higher education institutions and industry partners shall be structured, sustained, and embedded in institutional policies, systems, and governance processes, rather than limited to ad hoc, project-based, or short-term arrangements;
- b. ***Co-Creation and Shared Problem-Solving*** – Higher education institutions and industry partners shall jointly identify challenges, opportunities, and priorities, and shall collaboratively design, implement, and review initiatives that enhance the relevance of learning outcomes, research activities, and innovation efforts;

- c. ***Mutual Accountability*** – Higher education institutions, industry partners, and relevant government agencies shall recognize and uphold shared responsibility for outcomes relating to graduate relevance, skills utilization, employability, research translation, and workforce readiness, subject to their respective roles and mandates;
- d. ***Respect for Academic Freedom and Institutional Autonomy*** – All partnerships shall uphold academic freedom, protect institutional autonomy, and respect the authority of higher education institutions over academic matters, governance, and internal decision-making processes;
- e. ***Inclusivity and Equitable Participation*** – The Framework shall promote inclusive participation by public and private higher education institutions, including regional, emerging, and resource-constrained institutions, as well as by diverse industry sectors, including small and medium enterprises and industries outside major urban centers;
- f. ***Regional Balance and Development Sensitivity*** – Engagement mechanisms shall take into account regional development priorities, labor market conditions, and local industry contexts, and shall support balanced growth across regions; and
- g. ***Future-Readiness and Adaptability*** – Partnerships shall anticipate technological change, emerging occupations, evolving industry needs, and long term development trends, and shall promote adaptability, continuous learning, and innovation within the tertiary education system.

SEC. 6. Modes of Higher Education-Industry Partnership — Consistent with the Higher Education–Industry Partnership Framework, collaboration between higher education institutions and industry partners may be undertaken through the following modes, mechanisms, and arrangements, subject to applicable laws, rules, and regulations:

- a. ***Structured advisory arrangements***, including participation of industry representatives in consultative or advisory bodies, committees, or forums established by higher education institutions for the purpose of providing inputs on program relevance, emerging skills requirements, occupational trends, and industry developments, without encroaching upon academic decision-making;
- b. ***Joint planning and coordination for work-integrated learning***, including internships, practicums, apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and other forms of supervised workplace exposure, undertaken in coordination with existing enterprise-based education and training and lifelong learning frameworks, and designed to support graduate transition and employability;
- c. ***Collaborative research, development, and innovation initiatives***, including joint or co-funded research projects, applied research activities, technology development, innovation challenges, and knowledge-transfer activities that respond to industry needs and societal priorities, consistent with institutional research policies and ethical standards;
- d. ***Faculty exposure, immersion, and professional development programs***, including opportunities for faculty members to engage with industry settings for purposes of updating professional knowledge, strengthening industry awareness, and enhancing the relevance of instruction and research, subject to institutional policies and guidelines;
- e. ***Shared access to facilities, laboratories, equipment, and innovation spaces***, including arrangements for the joint use, development, or enhancement of physical or digital infrastructure that support learning, research, and innovation, subject to agreed terms and applicable regulations; and

- f. ***Coordinated participation in regional and sectoral development planning***, including engagement in industry roadmaps, workforce development plans, innovation strategies, and other development initiatives that require inputs from higher education institutions and industry partners.

Provided, That participation in any of the foregoing modes of partnership shall be voluntary and shall be entered into by mutual agreement of the parties concerned;

Provided, finally, That such partnerships shall not substitute for, preempt, or circumvent accreditation, quality assurance, program approval, licensing, or other regulatory processes required by law or by the appropriate government authorities.

SEC. 7. *Creation of the Tripartite Council for Tertiary Education* — There is hereby created a Tripartite Council for Tertiary Education (TCTE) which shall serve as the principal national coordinating, advisory, and intelligence body for the implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and continuous refinement of the Higher Education–Industry Partnership Framework, with the objective of strengthening coherence, relevance, and responsiveness of higher education–industry collaboration in the tertiary education sector.

The Council shall function as the primary institutional mechanism for facilitating structured dialogue, joint assessment, and strategic coordination among higher education institutions, industry partners, and relevant government agencies, and shall provide a permanent forum for the generation, consolidation, and

interpretation of labor market, skills, and innovation intelligence relevant to tertiary education, consistent with national development priorities.

Provided, That the Council shall be consultative and coordinative in nature and shall exercise its functions through recommendation, facilitation, and advisory processes only;

Provided, further, That the Council shall not exercise regulatory, accrediting, licensing, supervisory, or enforcement powers, nor issue binding directives affecting academic programs, institutional governance, or regulatory decisions;

Provided, finally, That the Council shall not supplant, diminish, or assume the statutory mandates, powers, or functions of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), the Department of Education (DepEd), the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), or any other government agency, but shall operate strictly within the bounds of coordination, advisory support, and policy recommendation as provided in this Act.

SEC. 8. *Composition, Leadership, and Secretariat of the Council* — The Tripartite Council for Tertiary Education shall be composed of representatives from government, higher education, and industry, reflecting a balanced and inclusive tripartite structure to ensure that diverse perspectives inform the implementation and continuous refinement of the Higher Education–Industry Partnership Framework.

- a. ***Government Representation.*** — The government sector shall be represented by the following officials, or their duly authorized permanent representatives, serving in an ex officio capacity:

1. Chairperson of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED);
 2. Director-General of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA);
 3. Secretary of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE);
 4. Secretary of the Department of Education (DepEd); and
 5. Secretary of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).
- b. ***Higher Education Representation.*** — The higher education sector shall be represented by six (6) members, to be designated from among nationally recognized federations of public and private higher education institutions and accreditation bodies, as may be determined in accordance with guidelines issued by CHED, to ensure broad representation across institutional types, geographic regions, and governance structures.
- c. ***Industry Representation.*** — The industry sector shall likewise be represented by six (6) members, to be designated from among nationally recognized employer, business, professional, and sectoral federations, including representatives from priority, emerging, and innovation-driven industries, as may be identified in accordance with guidelines issued by CHED in consultation with relevant stakeholders.
- d. ***Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson.*** — The Chairperson of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) shall serve as Chairperson of the Council and shall preside over its meetings, set the agenda in consultation with the members, and ensure the effective discharge of its functions. The Director-General of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) shall serve as Vice-Chairperson and shall assist the Chairperson and perform such functions as may be assigned by the Council. In the absence or incapacity of the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson shall act as Chairperson, and the Chairperson may delegate functions to such members or officers of the Council as may be necessary.

- e. ***Secretariat.*** — The Tripartite Council for Tertiary Education shall be attached to the Commission on Higher Education for administrative and budgetary purposes. CHED shall provide a permanent Secretariat to the Council, which shall be responsible for providing technical, administrative, and logistical support, including the preparation of meeting materials, documentation of proceedings, coordination with members and stakeholders, management of data and reports, and monitoring of follow-through on Council recommendations. The Secretariat shall be manned by organic personnel of CHED and may be augmented by personnel detailed or seconded from member-agencies of the Council, subject to existing civil service laws, rules, and regulations.
- f. ***Compensation and Meetings.*** — Members of the Council, except those serving in an ex officio capacity, may receive per diem or reasonable allowances for meetings actually attended, subject to existing budgeting, accounting, and auditing rules and regulations. The Council shall meet on a regular basis, at least quarterly, and may convene special meetings as may be necessary for the effective performance of its functions.

Provided, That the composition and operations of the Council shall at all times respect institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and the statutory mandates of the participating agencies and organizations;

Provided, further, That the detailed procedures for appointment, representation, convening, and internal operations of the Council shall be prescribed in the implementing rules and regulations to be issued pursuant to this Act.

SEC. 9. Powers and Functions of the Council — The Council shall have the following powers and functions:

- a. Monitor domestic and international labor-market trends affecting tertiary education, including employment and unemployment patterns, occupational shifts, emerging industries, technological developments, and global workforce movements, insofar as these have implications for higher education relevance, graduate outcomes, and long-term human capital development;
- b. Conduct periodic inventories and assessments of skills, competencies, and job requirements relevant to higher education graduates, including the identification of current and emerging skills gaps, priority competencies, and evolving occupational standards across sectors and regions;
- c. Generate, consolidate, analyze, and interpret labor-market, skills, and innovation intelligence, drawing from available government data, industry inputs, academic studies, and other credible sources, for the purpose of informing higher education–industry collaboration, planning, and policy formulation;
- d. Recommend short-term, medium-term, and long-term policy measures to the President of the Philippines, Congress, and relevant government agencies on matters affecting higher education–industry alignment, workforce relevance, innovation capacity, and graduate employability, consistent with national development priorities;
- e. Spearhead the implementation, periodic review, and updating of the Higher Education–Industry Partnership Framework, including the identification of implementation issues, good practices, and areas for improvement, and the formulation of strategic directions for sustained collaboration;
- f. Receive, synthesize, and evaluate inputs, recommendations, and assessments submitted by Regional and Sectoral Advisory Boards established pursuant to this Act, and integrate such inputs into national-level analysis, policy advice, and framework refinement;

- g. Hold regular meetings, at least once every quarter, and such special meetings as may be necessary for the effective performance of its functions, and adopt internal procedures consistent with this Act and its implementing rules and regulations; and
- h. Perform such other functions as may be necessary, incidental, or related to the attainment of the objectives of this Act and the effective implementation of the Higher Education–Industry Partnership Framework.

SEC. 10. *Annual General Assembly* — The Tripartite Council for Tertiary Education shall convene an annual General Assembly of higher education institutions, industry partners, relevant government agencies, accreditation bodies, and other stakeholders involved in or affected by higher education–industry collaboration, which shall serve as the primary national convergence mechanism under the Higher Education-Industry Partnership Framework.

The annual General Assembly shall be convened at least once every calendar year and shall provide a structured venue for broad-based consultation, exchange of information, and collective assessment of developments affecting higher education relevance, workforce alignment, innovation, and graduate outcomes at the national, regional, and sectoral levels.

Provided, That the annual General Assembly shall serve as the principal forum for national dialogue, assessment, and collective learning on the implementation of the Higher Education–Industry Partnership Framework, including the identification of emerging trends, implementation challenges, good practices, and priority areas for policy attention; *Provided*, further, That the Annual Higher Education–Industry Partnership Report,

together with relevant analytical briefs, data summaries, and thematic assessments prepared by or for the Council, shall be formally presented and discussed during the Assembly to facilitate transparency, informed discussion, and stakeholder feedback;

Provided, further, That the Assembly may include plenary sessions, thematic discussions, sector-focused or region-focused consultations, and other structured activities as may be necessary to elicit meaningful inputs from participating institutions and stakeholders;

Provided, finally, That the proceedings, outcomes, conclusions, and policy recommendations arising from the Annual General Assembly shall be duly documented by the Secretariat and transmitted to the Council, and shall be taken into consideration by the Council in the formulation of policy recommendations, strategic directions, and updates to the Higher Education–Industry Partnership Framework.

SEC. 11. *Regional and Sectoral Advisory Boards* — Regional and Sectoral Industry-Higher Education Advisory Boards may be constituted, as may be necessary and appropriate, to provide localized, sector-specific, and context-sensitive inputs in support of the implementation and continuous refinement of the Higher Education-Industry Partnership Framework.

Such Advisory Boards shall serve as platforms for structured consultation, dialogue, and joint problem identification among higher education institutions, industry stakeholders, and relevant government entities within a defined geographic region or economic sector, taking into account local labor market

conditions, industry composition, development priorities, and institutional capacities.

The Advisory Boards may assist in identifying region-specific and sector-specific skills needs, emerging workforce trends, graduate transition issues, research and innovation opportunities, and other matters relevant to strengthening higher education–industry collaboration, for consideration at the national level.

SEC. 12. *Institutional Partnership Units* — Higher education institutions are encouraged to establish or designate Higher Education-Industry Partnership Units within their respective organizational structures to serve as focal points for the planning, coordination, and management of engagement with industry partners, consistent with the objectives of the Higher Education-Industry Partnership Framework.

Such Partnership Units may be responsible for facilitating sustained and structured interaction between academic units, research offices, administrative offices, and industry stakeholders; coordinating institutional participation in partnership activities, including advisory engagements, work-integrated learning arrangements, research and innovation initiatives, and faculty exposure programs; and supporting the alignment of such activities with institutional missions, development plans, and quality assurance systems.

The Partnership Units may likewise ensure the observance of ethical standards, transparency requirements, and conflict-of-interest safeguards in the conduct of higher education-industry partnerships, including the development or implementation of internal guidelines governing partnership arrangements, data

sharing, intellectual property considerations, and the protection of academic integrity.

Further, the Partnership Units may be tasked with documenting, monitoring, and evaluating partnership activities and outcomes for purposes of institutional learning, continuous improvement, and internal planning, including the preparation of reports, case studies, and other records that may inform decision-making at the institutional level and contribute to evidence-based refinement of partnership practices.

Provided, That the establishment or designation of such Partnership Units shall not be mandatory and shall be undertaken at the discretion of the higher education institution concerned, taking into account its size, mandate, resources, and institutional context.

SEC. 13. *Annual Report to Congress* — The Council shall submit to Congress an Annual Higher Education–Industry Partnership Report, which shall include, among others, assessments of graduate employment and employability outcomes, labor market and workforce trends, current and emerging skills requirements, and policy recommendations to strengthen higher education–industry collaboration, workforce relevance, and innovation capacity, consistent with national development objectives and priorities.

SEC. 14. *Implementing Rules and Regulations* — Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) shall promulgate the necessary implementing rules and regulations.

SEC. 15. *Appropriations* — The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 16. *Separability Clause* — If any provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 17. *Repealing Clause* — All laws, rules, regulations, and issuances inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 18. *Effectivity* — This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,