the**QA**commons

THE QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMONS
for HIGHER *and* POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

The QA Communique

We are delighted to share with you our first quarterly update on the activities of our work at the Quality Assurance Commons, and future projects. We welcome your comments. Please feel free to share this newsletter with others who might be interested and/or on social media. We are now at a point where we have built a strong foundation for expanding our scope and our community of "followers" and supporters.

Visit our Website

Kentucky EEQ CERT Initiative

We continue to work with the 19 programs at Bluegrass, Gateway and Jefferson Community and Technical Colleges, and Kentucky State, Murray State and the University of Kentucky. This past winter all completed a self-assessment and received a feedback report. That led to the creation of action plans by each program identifying further areas where improvements or data collection needed to be undertaken. From these steps we identified four programs to "accelerate" in the development and submission of portfolios for external review: the Medical Assisting program from Bluegrass CTC, the FAME AMT program from Jefferson CTC, and the Construction Engineering & Technology and Occupational Safety & Health programs from Murray State. Our plan is to use the four portfolios submitted as a basis for learning and supporting the remaining programs as they develop their portfolios
.
These four "accelerated" programs have now submitted portfolios, which are currently in the review process. Certification results for these programs will likely be announced in early November. The remaining programs are developing their portfolios for submission by January 15, 2020.

To assure fairness and consistency in the certification process, each portfolio will be reviewed by two trained external reviewers, who will score the portfolio on their own first, then consolidate their findings into a single report. When the reviewers recommend certification, their report will be reviewed by a subcommittee of the QA Commons Board of Directors who will make the final certification decision Certification will be for a period of three years.

During the first week of September, program participants convened in Frankfort to share experiences and ideas around the EEQ CERT process. A panel of three representatives from the accelerated programs shared their experiences and highlighted examples where the process added significant value to students and employers. Reported benefits of participation included:

- Bringing employability awareness into the faculty culture and getting faculty to be more intentional about employability
- Sharing the EEQs and the EEQ CERT process for feedback from employers with good responses
- Thinking disruptively about how to make the EEQs more integrated in the program's curriculum
- Creating new ways of documenting student achievement of workplace readiness skills (our EEQs)

Dr. Aaron Thompson, President of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE), spoke to the group and highlighted his commitment to support employability and responsiveness to business/industry needs as a hallmark of his leadership of the higher education system. Dr. Thompson's maintains an active Twitter presence, posting on topics of quality, equity, and and higher education transformation. You can follow his feed **here**.

We are also grateful to Lumina Foundation for supporting our work. We were delighted that Debra Humphreys, Vice President of Strategic Engagement, was able to join us at the Kentucky Convening. A video of Debra discussing Lumina's Quality Credentials Taskforce (on which Dr. Thompson served) and their vision for creating a higher education system can be viewed **here**.

Kentucky Faculty Employability Fellows

One key message we have heard from employers is the need for faculty to understand the changes occurring in today's workplace, and to prepare students more effectively with skills such as our EEQs. In response, in partnership with CPE, the QA Commons developed a Faculty Employability Fellows program to develop faculty workplace champions at two-year and four-year institutions.

Our inaugural Faculty Employability Fellows (FEF) cohort was launched in early September with 14 Fellows from 7 community colleges and universities. A roster of this cohort can be found **here**. We were most fortunate to recruit Janna Vice, Provost and Professor Emeritus at Eastern Kentucky University, as director of this new program.

Fellows are tasked with:
- Conducting a campus environmental scan of employability initiatives currently underway;
- Conducting a regional scan of employers' perceptions of employability among college graduates;
- Engaging state workforce agencies and intermediaries, policy influencers and policy makers;
- Designing personal employability impact projects and
- Sharing key learning with colleagues and higher education leaders in the spring of 2020.

In early November, the Fellows will reconvene in a two day retreat. They will have the opportunity to meet with Kentucky Labor Secretary Derrick Ramsey, K-12 Commissioner Wayne Lewis and President Aaron Thompson, along with other policy and employer leaders.

Learn more about the Faculty Employability Fellows program **here**.

NSF Subcontract

The QA Commons is the recipient of a subcontract of a grant awarded by NSF in its Accelerator Convergence Program to the University of Virginia and Rivera Partners in San Francisco. The project "Unpacking the Technology Career Path" is designed to use AI and a large database of career pathways of successful tech managers to create a web-based model for more clear career pathways for minority, first generation and women undergraduate students in STEM fields. The QA Commons role will be to sponsor focus groups at community colleges and universities to assess the usability of the models developed and generate data on how the Essential Employability Qualities are incorporated into the students' curricula and career guidance.

National Update

The QA Commons received its 501(c)3 status in March 2019 and is bridging from our current fiscal relationship with NCHEMS to operating as an independent tax-exempt organization. We have now established a formal

Board of Directors with seven members (see **here**). Art Levine, President Emeritus at the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation; Rebecca Busaca, CEO& Founder of Workforce Outcomes and Accreditation Advisors, and Erick Montenegro, recent PhD recipient and Director of Communications for NILOA, are the three newest members of the Board.

The QA Commons is in discussion with a number of institutions and systems about future EEQ CERT and employability work. These discussions include:

- A joint proposal submitted with the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) to Lumina Foundation in response to their Quality Assurance RFP. The proposal is to use the EEQ CERT process to revise the statewide program review process win collaboration with the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) and their regional accreditor (NECHE).
- The development of a year-long Employability Academy. The Academy will be designed to focus on creation of a "culture of employability" within institutions, building on existing work already underway. Teams from community colleges and universities will come together and work on employability projects within their institution, and undertake readiness assessments organized around the categories of the EEQ CERT process.
- Active conversations with others about expanding the scope and scale of activities

In December, The QA Commons will be presenting at the SACS-COC and Complete College America Conferences, along with Aaron Thompson and Kris Williams (Chancellor, KCTCS) at SACS-COC and with Aaron Thompson and Mark Arant from the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education at CCA.

We appreciate your interest and support for our work, and welcome your comments and suggestions.