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Faculty Employability Fellows Impact Project

ENSURING THE EMPLOYABILITY OF GATEWAY COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE'S GRADUATES

A new direction via the essential employability qualities

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Through interviews with area businesses and conversations with local advisory boards, Dean Amy Carrino discovered that an area for improvement at GCTC was in embedding employability qualities in its curriculum. Further, she identified a need for work-based learning experiences to be embedded in all programs so that students can demonstrate these skills before graduation and in the workplace.

OPPORTUNITY/PROPOSAL

Dean Carrino's interviews and conversations revealed that, while students are well trained in their demonstration of the skills learned for their desired profession, they often lack the skills needed to be successful in the area of employment.

SOLUTION

This Final Impact Project for GCTC presents to the College of Business, Information Technology and Professional Studies three proposals for enhancing employability at the program, division, and institutional levels:

1. **Embedding the EEQs at the Program Level Through Work-Based Learning Experiences**

With a goal of ensuring all Business Program students participate in a work-based learning experience, embedded with the [Essential Employability Qualities](#) (EEQs) before graduating, Dean Carrino has proposed that GCTC will adopt a local policy requiring *every* business student to participate in a work-based learning experience that embeds the eight EEQs.

To participate, students must successfully complete two required courses in the business curriculum — the Business Employability Seminar (BAS 270) and Professional Development and Protocol (BAS 260).

Evaluations of the work-based experience will require a supervisor to comment on all eight of the EEQs at the mid-term point and at the end of the experience. Student learning outcomes will also be revised to measure each student's mastery of the EEQs. A Blackboard (a Learning Management System) shell has been created for students to utilize while participating in the work-based learning experience. The shell will hold all documents needed for the student and the employer to use during the experience.

Alumni will be given the opportunity to assess the requirement, offer suggestions on how the experience may be improved, and have the opportunity to speak with students about the value of the work-based learning experience and badging system.

With the support of the college's Academic Dean and Provost, the policy has been approved and will be in full effect by August 1, 2020, for all business students.

2. **Embedding the EEQs at the Program Level Throughout the Curriculum**

Intended to ensure that all Business Program students have acquired the EEQs through the curriculum *before* participating in a work-based learning experience, Dean Carrino proposes that GCTC provide the support needed to ensure each business class encompasses *at least* one of the EEQs. Additionally, the EEQs will be added to program learning outcomes so that student success can be measured.

The Provost, Academic Dean, and Business faculty support this curriculum change. Faculty have begun to review their curriculums to determine which EEQs may already be embedded and which are not. EEQ mastery will be assessed by a variety of means that may include quizzes, assignments, or self-paced videos that will lead to eight badges representing each of the EEQs.

Local industry will be engaged through work-based learning experiences, advisory councils, and serving as guest lecturers so that the curriculum reflects the dynamic changes occurring in the workplace.

The details of this proposal are to be complete by August 1, 2020.

3. Creating a Career Center at GCTC for Embedding the EEQs at the Program Level Throughout the Curriculum

GCTC does not have a Career Center for students. Dean Carrino noted her visit to the Career and Co-Op Center at Eastern Kentucky University, does the following:

- Assists students with career exploration
- Supports the eight EEQs
- Finds suitable work-based learning experiences for students
- Assists in finding suitable career clothing
- Provides resume assistance and mock interviews
- Provides space for employers to conduct interviews for work-based learning experiences and employment
- Assists students in finding employment that provides them with a livable wage.

The development of a dedicated Career Center at GCTC is supported by the Provost, Academic Deans from various programs, faculty and students. Dean Carrino is committed to seeking funding opportunities to build this much needed center. The EEQs will be a focal point of the career center.

IMPACT/IMPLEMENTATION

Dedication around the EEQs into curriculum and required participation in work-based learning experiences will profoundly impact all Business Program students.

Dean Carrino expects faculty and staff from other disciplines to see the difference that these measures make and begin to follow suit. The Business Program will serve as an exemplar and source of inspiration within the college.

The support of career services through early career exploration, improving students' knowledge of career options and encouraging them to develop and work toward goals, is critical. As such, a dedicated career center is important not only for four-year universities, but also at two-year colleges. If funding can be secured, there is opportunity to greatly improve completion rates, average time to completion, and the long-term success of GCTC students.