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THE QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMONS
for HIGHER *and* POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Faculty Employability Fellows Impact Project

Enhancing Employability by Introducing the Essential Employability Qualities During the First Year Experience Course

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Caroline Reisner, Associate Professor, Geology & Geography

Kara Schotter, Dean, Allied Health

Jefferson Community and Technical College

Employability skills are addressed to some degree in all programs of study at Jefferson Community and Technical College. However, student exposure to, and awareness of, the skills varies.

Essential Employability Qualities (EEQs) are typically included in the course learning outcomes for technical courses that are embedded within programs that are externally accredited. However, they appear in vague terminology or are assumed within many general education courses. Additionally, the degree to which an instructor makes the employability skills explicit varies. Students may be aware of the skills, but may not be able to articulate the skills to future employers on a resume or during an interview.

In discussions with local employers, there was considerable emphasis on the importance of student awareness of the skills that employers are looking for in future employees. While resumes generally indicate that applicants have the requisite technical skills, candidates frequently do not clearly articulate the soft skills that employers are looking for.

Greater Louisville Incorporated conducted a survey¹ with 52 company executives seeking input on the skills they seek in employees (internal report, 2019). The top three skills identified were reliability, work ethic and ambition, and problem-solving skills. Adaptability, teamwork, and verbal communication were also among the top skills identified in the survey.

Early career exploration connected with employability skills allow students to identify areas in which they need to enhance their skills set, in order to be prepared for the future profession.

OPPORTUNITY

The opportunity identified by Professor Reisner and Dean Schotter identified regarding the employability of graduates is the lack of explicit identification of EEQs during the instruction of the existing, required First Year Experience (FYE) course. Additionally, the level of introduction to these skills varies dependent upon the FYE course instructor.

SOLUTION/PROPOSAL

Professor Reisner and Dean Schotter propose the adoption of a policy requiring every first-year experience course instructor to embed the EEQs into the instruction of the course. Every assignment that is completed in the course will highlight one or more of the EEQs. The EEQs will be included on the course syllabus and in the course assignment descriptions. Students will also be assessed on their understanding of the eight EEQs during class presentations and on exams.

Employer partners will be engaged in the development of videos discussing the importance of the development of the EEQs. Videos will be shared with students enrolled in the FYE courses. Employers will also be asked to add their contact information to a list that will be provided to students for use in a career interview assignment. Students will discuss the essential skills necessary to work within a field with one of the employers in their field of interest from the provided list.

IMPACT/IMPLEMENTATION

As this Proposal incorporated into the FYE will impact *all* first-year students, the FYE course coordinator fully supports the implementation of this Proposal, and the Proposal will be in effect by August 2020 when the FYE courses begin for the Fall 2020 semester.

Dean Schotter has already begun plans on how to measure the impact of the FYE changes, and Professor Reisner has begun looking at how to make systematic changes to every general education course in a JCTC AA and AS program to support and reiterate the essential employability qualities through a student's entire academic career at Jefferson CTC.