HELPING STUDENTS ACHIEVE EMPLOYMENT: ENGAGING EMPLOYERS AND CAREER SERVICES

Developed by The National Council for Workforce Education for the Gulf Coast IT Consortium TAACCCT Grant
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ENGAGING EMPLOYERS AND WORK-BASED LEARNING

THE EMPLOYER EDUCATION DISCONNECT
In 2014, a Gallup poll, sponsored by the Lumina Foundation, revealed that 14% of Americans and only 11% of business leaders strongly agree that post-secondary graduates have the skills and competencies to succeed in the workplace. Concomitantly, in a survey conducted by Inside Higher Ed in conjunction with Gallup, 96% of Chief Academic Officers believe they are successfully preparing students for the workforce. Recently, a College for America study found that the difficulty in finding well qualified applicants is a key challenge for 85% of HR and director-level respondents across all sectors!

Obviously there is a stark disconnect between what employers want and need to fill the skills gap and how educators view their education/training programs and the competencies of their graduates.

WHY ENGAGE EMPLOYERS
Engaging Employers is very time intensive yet extremely important. Community colleges need the input of employers to:

- understand the skills gap and to truly understand the competencies and skills that employers want and need to achieve growth and prosperity;
- validate and ensure curriculum currency that meets both accreditation requirements and business needs;
- stay on top of new technologies employed in the workplace;
- guarantee that their programs meet local labor market demand and if not, determine necessary changes;
- ensure jobs for their students; and
- contribute to the economic wealth of their communities.

Yet engaging employers is sometimes like being on a roller coaster. They don’t always know what they need and then they change their minds! It takes time and energy to get employers to articulate their needs and then you need to verify and then re-verify. As rapidly as technology changes, so do the needs of employers. These technology shifts and changes force employers to be flexible and to change just as quickly to remain competitive.

At the same time, technology and the daily influx of emails, tweets, texts, etc., have made all of our lives very busy. For employers, the most important issue is productivity and their bottom line. Thus, it is
hard to get them away from their daily operation - time is money. Nonetheless, it is critical for community colleges to make every effort to engage employers if we want to ensure that our students obtain employment upon completion.

Additionally, if we do not engage employers, we take the chance of solving an anecdote and never getting to the root of the problem and we end up creating education/training programs in which there are no jobs.

Finally, it is estimated that community colleges receive less than 2% of corporate contributions to higher education. Connecting employers to the college and college Foundation can enhance equipment donation, materials donations, donations to capital campaigns, and donations to scholarship funds.

**STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT**

Engaging employers should be a responsibility of everyone at the college because everyone at the college has a stake in the economic vitality of their community. Thus, employer engagement should be a goal in every Community College’s Strategic Plan. As a goal, the college needs to identify the following:

- Who is responsible and for what?
- What type of resources are necessary to achieve success?
- What are the expected outcomes of the engagement?
- How will you measure success?
- How do you ensure feedback loops?

Because employer engagement impacts many areas of the college, the strategic plan should also address the following questions.

- How do advisory boards and faculty connect to career center staff, internship staff, and job placement staff?
- How do advisory Boards and faculty connect to the College Foundation?
- How do you loop back the President’s connections in the community to programs?
- What are the plans to ensure that your engagement with employers is ongoing and continuous?

**THE ROLE OF THE COLLEGE PRESIDENT**

In accordance with accreditation, the college president is responsible for the college’s strategic plan. Thus, the college president must play a critical role in employer and community outreach and take an
active role in engaging employers. To business leaders, the president is their peer. CEOs want to be strategic partners and not just someone the faculty call when they need a piece of equipment. Thus, the role of the college president and other college leaders is essential in turning employers from advisory or transactional partners, to strategic partners. Building that trusting, strategic relationship between the leadership of the college and business leaders is a win-win for all involved.

There are numerous ways in which the president can engage with business leaders. Two effective examples are: The President’s Listening Tour and Breakfast with the President.

**President’s Listening Tour**
Instead of always expecting the employers to come to us, going to them and experiencing their company or business helps to build trust. The conversation should not be about the college, but rather about the employer:

1. What keeps you up at night?
2. What contributes to your company’s productivity and growth?
3. What are your current labor market needs?
4. What are your projected labor market needs?
5. Is there a skills gap between what you need and what you are seeing in the local labor market?
6. How can the college help in addressing your challenges?
7. What policies, both local and national, have the strongest impact on your bottom-line?

The president should consider including the college’s Public Information Officer on the tour. They can take the role of note-taker so that the president is engaged in a more focused conversation. Additionally, the PIO officer plays an important role in assisting the president in future communication strategies and in planning events that include the employers.

Although this event is about the employer, the college president becomes more informed as to what is happening in the community regarding employment. Through this relationship building, the most important outcome should be the president meeting a new peer and beginning a strategic, long-term relationship with a potential college champion!

**Breakfast with the President**
This is the opportunity for the president to tell business leaders about the college. Because business leaders are always time constrained, the best time to engage them effectively is before they start their business day. Ideas to consider:
- Make the event thematic or around an industry cluster.
- Make the event less than an hour and to the point. Begin at 7:00am and get folks out the door no later than 8:00 am. For some industry clusters, like manufacturing or construction in the summer, you may need to hold the event at 6:30am.
- Include faculty and students. Have faculty and students scattered throughout the room and strategically placed at tables with employers.
- Ask employers to bring one or two peers. This involves them as more than just participants, but also as planners and part of the team.

Breakfast with the President is a great opportunity and time for the president to ask employers to make a commitment to the college. If you don’t ask, you don’t know what they are willing to do. Employers want to contribute to their college and their community - they too want to be good citizens of their community.

There are numerous other activities that the college president can engage in to build partnerships with business leaders in the community. A few ideas include:
- Inviting business leaders to college sporting events or plays, musicals, etc.
- Inviting business leaders to foundation events
- Attending a K-12 function together and partnering with business leaders to assist in strengthening K-12
- Asking employers to join the president when speaking to the legislator regarding funding or other issues important to education

COMPREHENSIVE ENGAGEMENT
After these types of events, the college needs to follow-up with attendees with a checklist and ask them how they are willing to support the college. This list should be comprehensive and include all of the things that college staff have identified through the strategic planning process that are valuable inputs from employers.

- Offering student and/or faculty internships
- Posting job openings
- Offering job shadowing opportunities for students
- Consulting the college in develop customized employee training
- Serving on a programmatic advisory board
• Participating in career fairs
• Donating equipment, supplies or materials
• Speaking in classes
• Attending college sporting or extracurricular events
• Partnering with the president in K-12 initiatives
• Donating to the foundation

In developing the checklist, also ask the business leader to identify contact individuals from their company including human resources and production supervisors. To turn this from a transactional relationship to a strategic relationship, connect the company’s human resources staff with the college’s job developer and career center staff. Connect the production supervisor with the faculty. This begins spreading responsibility for strategic engagement throughout the college. An example checklist can be found in Appendix A.

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**Bossier Parish Community College Best Practice**

To better engage employers and get them to make a commitment to their TAACCCT grant project, the BPCC GCIT team created three partnership levels for employers: Support Level, Partner Level, and Champion Level. The college provides employers with a list of activities to choose from. If they choose one activity they are considered supporters. If they commit to two activities they are partners and three or more, they are considered champions. The college created “push cards” that they give to employers at college events explaining the partnership opportunities. The cards also explain to the employers the benefits of partnership with the college. Once the employer makes the commitment, they are tracked on a spreadsheet that the college uses in their outreach efforts.

A copy of the push cards and tracking spreadsheet can be found in Appendix B.

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Additionally, collaborating and partnering with workforce investment boards and economic development agencies leads to a more comprehensive and varied engagement. WIOA has become an important and integral part of community college’s workforce and economic development strategies. Supporting WIOA and being an effective partner is another strategy for engaging with employers. Ways to support WIOA and local economic development initiatives include:
• Lead and/or host a workforce development gap analysis proceedings to understand the needs versus supply pipeline

• Participate in economic development sectoral strategy discussions

• Participate in or lead discussions regarding K-12 completion and connection to higher education strategic planning for the community

• Work with employers to define and determine industry-based certifications germane to their industry and then engage faculty in infusing these certifications into the curriculum

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**South Louisiana Community College Best Practice**

**Workforce Investment Board Partnership**

Through long term relationships and intentional engagement, SLCC has forged a strong working relationship with their local WIBs (LWIB 40 and 41) and One Stop Career Centers. Dr. Willie Smith, Vice Chancellor of Economic and Workforce Development, sits on the executive board of LWIB41, and Courtney Ledet, TAACCCT Project Manager, previously ran the KYTE Adult Education program (which was sponsored by LWIB41). The college and WIBs partnered to offer Career Readiness workshops for TAACCCT participants. In addition, college staff worked closely with WIB partners to educate participants about the various services and training opportunities offered by the local One Stop Career Centers. Staff at the One Stops register participants in HIRE, the job-seeking site run by the Louisiana Workforce Commission. The WIB has also proved invaluable in providing the college with local labor market data which in turn keeps the college informed as to where workers are needed in the Acadiana region. Through the TAACCCT grant the college has further strengthened the relationship with WIB partners by establishing a connection between the WIBs and SLCC’s Career and Transfer Services department. This relationship will live on past the end of the grant, and current and future students of SLCC will reap the benefits ensuring their success in their future careers.
CONTINUOUS ENGAGEMENT

To cultivate a long term, trusting relationship, continuous communication is key! Once the president has made the connection, then the faculty and staff take over to ensure continuous engagement. If you don’t follow-up, you don’t maintain the relationship.

The trick is to take what was gleaned in the president’s activities and turn it into an action plan. Again, if employer engagement is part of the college’s strategic plan, then everyone has a role. College leadership should merge the checklist with college staff responsibilities and assign staff accordingly. For example:

- Faculty are connected with potential advisory board members.
- From the list of interested speakers, faculty are tasked with inviting them to speak in the classroom.
- Faculty, division chairs, directors and deans are responsible for involving production supervisors in facilities design or equipment purchases.
- Career center staff are tasked with engaging HR personnel regarding internships, career fairs and job placement.
- Foundation staff invite employers to events not only at the college, but in the community.
- The College’s Public Information Officer connects with employers regarding legislative agenda items.

Sometimes employers will agree to be engaged but when asked, turn down the opportunity. Don’t fret! Remember, just because an employer declines to participate in one event, does not mean they are not willing to be supportive. Make continuous connections and in time, the right one will stick.
MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL ENGAGEMENT

The relationship with employers cannot be one-sided in which the college always takes while the employer always gives. The relationship must create value for both. For the college, the value-add is in curriculum currency and jobs for students. For the employer, it is a skilled workforce and support from the college regarding issues of importance to employers. The President’s Listening Tour is an example of a mutually beneficial engagement. The business leader benefits from the college president taking the results of the conversation back to the college to ensure programs meet employer needs. The college president benefits from their increased visibility in the community with business leaders.

During the president’s listening tour, the president asked the employers about policy issues. How does the college provide support to the employers? For example, if a local tax would impede local manufacturers from distributing a product, can the college president or PIO officer right an op-ed in support of the employers? When the college president is visiting with local politicians, can they express their support for the employer and for their policy concerns? Vice-versa, the college president can ask the employer to attend a legislative briefing with them on state appropriations and thus, the employer serves as an advocate for college supporting state funding.

Additionally, when the employer needs skilled workers, the college can respond rapidly with job fairs and recommending students. Or when the employer needs to upskill their current workforce, the college develops customized training. The employer wins because productivity is increased and the college wins by satisfying their employer customer! The partnership is two-sided and mutually beneficial for both. Meridian Community College and Rush Health Systems is an outstanding example of a mutually beneficial relationship.
IMPACT ON THE COLLEGE
Engaging employers is hard work and takes time and effort, but the positive outcomes impact the college significantly. Strategic, continuous, comprehensive, and mutually beneficial employer engagement leads to the college being seen in the community as a very important player in all workforce and economic health of the community. When looking for employees, the employer will turn first to the college. When looking for training, the employer will contact the college to discuss customized contract training. The connection between the employer and the college is enhanced and students benefit!

Impact on Curriculum and Programming
Employer engagement strengthens faculty and employer connections. Employers willingly assist faculty in curriculum and program design ensuring program currency. Faculty and employers discuss industry-based certifications and determine if and when they should be infused into the curriculum. And employers assist in facilities design and equipment procurement ensuring that the classroom mirrors local industry. The result – students are better prepared for employment.

Impact on Student Job Placement
Engaging employers improves career services. When employers assist in designing and offering internships or work-based learning opportunities, students gain employability skills and are better prepared for the workplace. Participating in mock interviews and other job placement activities helps

Meridian Community College Best Practice
Rush Health Systems Partnership

MCC’s partnership with Rush Health Systems is a great example of a mutually beneficial partnership. The staff at MCC work very closely with Rush Health Systems in designing curriculum and customized training. In response, Rush Health Systems is highly involved in helping students get employment by participating in job fairs, mock interviews, pre-hire screening (CRC Workkeys), guest speakers for courses, and job shadowing/work experience hours. Rush has also made a commitment to their incumbent workforce by allowing those who qualify to take MCC courses at night with Rush paying the tuition and fees. If their current employees complete the training at MCC, they are eligible for a wage increase. It is a win-win partnership for both the college and the employer: students get jobs upon completion of training, incumbent workers gain a wage increase, and the employer chooses future employees from a highly-skilled labor pool while retaining their current skilled workforce.
students recognize the skills and competencies that employers require. Students are also better informed as to the types of employment opportunities available in their community and hopefully make better career choices. All-in-all, the students are better prepared for work and are more likely to achieve employment when they have the opportunity to engage with employers.

CELEBRATE THE RELATIONSHIP
Saying “Thank You” in a public manner goes a long way to ensuring a long-term commitment and partnership. There are numerous ways in which the college can say thank you. To nurture and sustain the relationship between the president and the CEO, the president should consider thanking college partners by inviting them to be their guest at a college event such as a sporting event or a theater production. The PIO officer should work with the president to ensure that employers are recognized and thanked in all of the college public documents including: college catalog, college newsletter, website, course schedule, etc.

Advisory Board celebrations and year-end events are another great way to thank employers and to showcase students. Many colleges create “employer recognition awards” and present these at the advisory board celebrations. Employers love to be recognized while in the company of their peers. Like so many of us, they are competitive and if they see one of their competitors recognized, it may spur them to be more active and more engaged in the future so they too are recognized and awarded.

Kingsborough Community College in New York and Copiah-Lincoln Community College events are two great examples of fun celebrations designed to thank employers.

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Copiah-Lincoln Community College Best Practice Advisory Board Catfish Dinner

Each year, Co-Lin hosts an advisory board celebration in which Career and Technical Education invites all advisory committee members. The Georgia Pacific Catfish Cooking Team provides a wonderful meal of fried catfish, hushpuppies and coleslaw. CTE and the college president give out several awards including the “President’s Award” and a “Special Recognition for Service Award.” The event is extremely well attended and considered a “not to miss” event by members of the community.
INTERNSHIPS AND WORK-BASED LEARNING
Internships and work-based learning experiences provide learners with ability to gain those hard to teach employability skills such as being on time, dressing appropriately for the workplace, working in a team, etc. Thus, they are of great value to the learner in that it gives them an edge over other students because they can assert real-life work experience on their resume. They can also be of great value to the employer. Internships provide employers with a source of highly motivated pre-professionals willing to show-case their skills and obtain new skills. Interns can be low-cost labor who help increase the company’s productivity. They are a cost-effective way to “test-drive” potential employees and to recruit talent. Internships increase the employer’s visibility on campus and are seen by students as prospective places to look for employment upon graduation. Most importantly, according to a study done by National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), when interns are hired upon completion of the internship, they are 40% more likely to be retained as employees after five-years. This saves employers time and money in recruitment costs!

Nonetheless, internships are not widely embraced by employers for two reasons. One of the biggest concerns for many employers is workers compensation. Worker’s compensation boards across the country have found that interns contribute enough to the employer to be considered an employee. Thus, the college needs to make the employer aware that they will probably need to pay into the workers compensation fund if they participate in an internship program. But by presenting the positive impacts of internships, colleges should be able to convince the employers that the ROI of having interns outweighs the cost of workers compensation.

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Kingsborough Community College Best Practice Culinary Celebration
Yearly, the college hosts a culinary celebration with Business and Industry leaders who support the college. Food is prepared by students in the college’s Culinary Arts Program. Honors students from technical programs, basic skills programs, and transfer programs are invited to participate and network with business leaders. Ahead of the event, college staff prep the students on how to mingle with business and industry leaders and how to present themselves as potential employees. This celebration is a thank you for the business leaders and an opportunity for students to sell themselves as potential employees!
Unemployment is a little bit tricky and needs to be explored in depth because states have different laws and rulings. For the most part, if the student is earning college credit or if the internship is a required component of the program, then they are not eligible for unemployment.

**Paid vs Unpaid Internships**
Recently, there have been a number of lawsuits regarding unpaid internships with some of the rulings being in conflict. At this point in time, it is best that colleges and employers understand the implications of the US Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). FLSA applies to all companies that have at least two employees directly engaged in interstate commerce and annual sales of at least $500,000. FLSA restricts these employers from using unpaid interns or trainees. However, if the interns are considered “leaders/trainees” then they can be unpaid as per USDOL as long as the internships meet these six criteria:

1. The Intern cannot displace a regular employee or employees
2. The Interns are not guaranteed a job at the end of the internship
3. Interns are not entitled to wages during the internship
4. Interns must receive training from the company even if it impedes the work of the business
5. Interns must get hands-on experience with equipment and processes used by the business or industry
6. Intern’s training must primarily benefit the intern and not the company

An example of a contract/application for an unpaid or volunteer internship is found in Appendix D.

**COMPONENTS OF A QUALITY INTERNSHIP OR WORK-BASED LEARNING PROGRAM**
Building and maintaining a high quality internship program is dependent on relationships with employers. It is time consuming and needs the proper staff to develop, design and maintain. In reality, to do this right, the college should have in place a full-time employee who focuses on work-based learning, job development, and placement. This individual should visit all potential internship sites to see what the business or industry is offering and to make a connection with the employer to begin a long-term partnership. The benefits of having in place an employee dedicated to internships and work-based learning in the end, outweighs the costs. A trained professional improves the college’s employer engagement and effectiveness by:

- formalizing the program while emphasizing the importance of work-based learning;
• bringing together work-based learning with placement;
• creating synergy between the job development component of the job and the faculty with regards to internships and job placement; and
• improving the college’s Perkins outcomes.

Credit vs Noncredit
Creating credit internship programs validates to the employer and the student that work-based learning is an important component of their academic program and career. The difficulty is getting faculty to give up a few credits in their program to formalize work-based learning credits into the curriculum. One trick is to link it to Perkins outcomes and Perkins funding.

Offering internships and work-based learning opportunities for credit also supports the college financially and allows the college to compensate faculty for their workload. Through tuition and FTEs, the college recoups much of the costs of the internship program. For example, a three credit internship brings in three credits of tuition and 1/5 of an FTE.

To determine the number of credits awarded for number of hours worked, think about utilizing the college’s clinical hour formula. Can you use the clinical hour formula to set the minimum and then allow the employer to determine how many hours they would like the student to work? Take care to ensure equity and standardization among programs to avoid faculty workload grievances or student grievances.

Learning Objectives and Job Description
If the internship is part of the educational program, then the internship work activities “must” focus on projects that are specifically related to the academic program and program learning outcomes. The faculty and the employer must work together to:

• Align the employer’s job description with the expected learning outcomes and assessments.
• Determine timing - when in the academic program does the student complete the internship.
• Ensure that the student is provided the opportunity to engage in real work assignments and is not making coffee or copies.
• Determine who the on-site supervisor or mentor is.
• Establish the role of faculty in supervision.

Faculty Workload and Evaluation of the Student’s Experience
To maintain academic integrity and rigor, a credit internship must be overseen by a faculty member and the faculty member should be compensated for their efforts through a part of their workload or through
a stipend. The difficult part is determining appropriate compensation. Consider the following when determining faculty compensation:

- Number of hours; faculty should do at least one site visit and a pre- and post-conference call with the internship mentor/supervisor.
- Faculty should do a post-evaluation in partnership with the supervisor and determine a grade.
- The number of credit hours for compensation should align with a college determined faculty workload criteria.
- Budget for faculty travel to internship sites.

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**Northeast Mississippi Community College Best Practice Internship Program**

The NEMCC Adult Basic Education department operates an internship program to strengthen the Career Pathway Programs offered through the Gulf IT Consortium Grant. Funds are provided by the Department of Labor and the Mississippi Partnership Counseling to Career grant. These funding streams are braided in order to provide learners the opportunity to gain valuable work experience while earning their GED and earning college credit in the Career Pathway Programs.

Last academic year, 53 students participated in the internship program. Each individual was allowed to work up to 19 hours and were paid $8 per hour. Twenty-nine employers across numerous sectors participated including: retail, nursing homes, schools, electrical businesses, automotive businesses, construction businesses, daycares, and local government. For 2015-16, NEMCC has been approved to provide 105 internship opportunities. These students will earn $8 per hour and can work a maximum of 40 hours. All of the employers who served as job sites last year plan to return.

Each employer signs a work site agreement and commits to serving as a mentor. Students are not placed on job sites until they have completed the Professional Work Ethics curriculum. Employers are briefed on the curriculum for the course and receive detailed instructions on holding the student accountable. When a problem arises between the employer and the student, the C2C Coach meets with the employer and the student to resolve the issue.

A sample of the contract signed by the employer and the student can be found in Appendix E.
CAREER SERVICES AND STUDENT JOB PLACEMENT

An employer’s primary goal for establishing a business-education partnership is to bring skilled workers into their business. The need to find a qualified workforce is paramount to achieving their economic goals and productivity. The college can help the employer lower their costs for recruitment and training and the school can get up to date information on what types of training is needed if a true partnership is achieved. Thus it is imperative that someone in the school take the first step in engaging employers. This partnership can produce a win-win for both the employer and the college. The employer gets trained candidates for their open positions and the school gets help from the employers to identify what skills are needed, making their programs relevant to the labor market. Most importantly, students get jobs!

WHY A CAREER CENTER?

If the college is truly committed to ensuring that students gain employment after completion of their program, then the college should have a comprehensive career center. Career and employment decision making is a highly personal process. It involves the integration of one's academic background and desires, psychological and external needs, work history and community, or family involvement with labor market trends. Thus, a comprehensive career center should be designed to:

- assist students in developing, evaluating, and/or implementing career, education, and employment decisions and plans;
- develop self-knowledge related to career choice and work performance by identifying, assessing, and understanding their competencies, interests, values, and personal characteristics;
- obtain educational and occupational information to aid their career and educational planning and to develop their understanding of the world of work;
- select the right academic program;
- prepare to find suitable employment by developing job-search skills, effective candidate presentation skills, and an understanding of the fit between their competencies and occupational and job requirements;
- link with alumni, employers, professional organizations, and others who will provide opportunities to explore future career possibilities; and
- prepare to manage their careers after graduation.
From first contact, colleges should encourage students to utilize the career center. An example checklist that colleges can provide students regarding using the career center can be found in Appendix F. Consider giving students this checklist or something similar at their first advising session or during orientation. Again, the more students access services, the more likely they are to obtain a job!

**STEPS TO ASSIST STUDENTS IN CAREER PLANNING AND JOB ATTAINMENT**

**Step 1: Career Assessment**
Too often, students make career choices for the wrong reasons: a friend likes his job, my brother makes good money, etc. Career Coaches or Career Advisors assist students making good choices based on both a self-assessment and the use of career assessment tools.

Self-assessment activities are designed to assist the student in discovering their personality type, abilities, strengths, interests, and values. Making a good career decision comes when the student assesses and matches their needs, personality, beliefs, values, and skills to fit the characteristics and requirements of a job. You can develop your own self-assessment tool or purchase one of the numerous tools available.

- Kuder: http://www.kuder.com/
- MAPP: http://www.assessment.com/?Accnum=06-5639-106.00
- Internship Predictor: http://www.internships.com/predictor
- Omni Behavioral Assessment: http://www.omniagroup.net/?page_id=46
- Strong Interest Inventory:
  http://www.discoveryourpersonality.com/stronginterestinventorycareertest.html

Before you purchase a tool, answer a few questions to be sure it is the right tool for your college. What do you want to assess and will the assessment be valuable to the student? What is the cost? Is it easy to use or will it take staff time to guide students? Lansing Community College in MI uses a four step assessment process that has proven effective.
STEP 2: JOB SEARCH SERVICES
A comprehensive career center also offers numerous activities to build students job search competencies and skills. Activities can include:

- Assist students in the application process by offering workshops on writing and preparing cover letters, resumes, and letters of recommendation and references.
- Offer opportunities to periodically review the students’ materials particularly as they look at several employment opportunities.
- Provide opportunities to practice interviewing skills. If the college has established a strong relationship with employers, they should participate so that the experience is conducted by an industry professional.
- Offer informational interviews. Human Resource professionals are often very willing to assist.
- Conduct work-ready workshops.
- Hold on-campus career fairs and recruiting events with local employers. These events may also offer on-campus interviewing and screening.

The intent of all of these activities is to help students get a job. How effective are they? On an annual basis, the National Association of Colleges and Employers surveys students at both four-year and two year colleges regarding the college’s career services. The two charts below rate the usage of college career services and students’ perceptions as to the usefulness of these services.
Accordingly, on a periodic basis, the college should assess themselves as to the effectiveness of their services. Do you know what services your students use and what services they find the most helpful? If not you could do a simple Survey Monkey survey to see where your students stand in comparison to this national study. Keep the survey short, no more than 3-5 minutes. Identify what focus you want for the survey – Is it activities used or activities they wish you offered? Or is it how often a student uses your services or is it how helpful your services are? To get students to participate, you may need to offer some type of drawing for a prize. However you get to students to participate, if you are truly committed to ensuring that students achieve employment, then periodically evaluating your center is worth the effort. Examples of survey questions can be found in Appendix G.

Louisiana Delta Community College and City Colleges of Chicago both offer outstanding programs to connect students to employers and to help students attain employment.
**City Colleges of Chicago Best Practice**  
**Employment Success Skills Program**

Under pressure from the city and the state legislature to ensure that employers could find a skilled workforce, City Colleges of Chicago worked with Accenture, an employment staffing firm, to develop online workshops to help students build job searching skills. Workshops are offered noncredit and the career center provides additional support after students complete the workshops. Workshops include: Career Management Skills; Career Assessments; Communication & Presentation; Resume & Cover Letter Writing; Professionalism; Self-Management & Work Ethics; Networking; Work Ethic; Critical Thinking Skills; Teamwork; Entrepreneurship; Creative Thinking; and Interviewing Skills.

As a result, placement numbers improved significantly and employers are now more engaged with the college.

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**Louisiana Delta Community College Best Practice**  
**Meet and Greet Employer Student Luncheon**

LA Delta brings together students and employers to explore career pathways and employment. During lunch, employers discuss their organizational functions and career opportunities. Students and employers are then broken down into roundtables by areas of interest to further discuss employment. Finally, students are offered the chance to meet with the employer one-on-one to discuss potential employment and or internship opportunities.

Prior to the roundtable, students are encouraged to participate in workshops offered through the career center to better prepare them to meet and talk to employers.

Employers found this activity so successful that they have committed to doing it again in the future.
From the NACE survey, it is obvious that resume writing assistance is the service most used, and most valued, by students. How can employers assist and ensure the effectiveness of this service?

**The Effective Resume – An Employer’s Perspective**

One complaint that college staff hear over and over again from employers is that potential employees lack in employability skills. The question to ponder is do graduates possess both occupational specific skills and employability skills but have they not done a good job of articulating them on their resume or in their interview? Hence the need for career center staff to engage with employers and with faculty. Students will have a tendency to highlight only their technical skills. Career center staff must know the employability skills required of employers and should have a basic understanding of the technical skills. Without that knowledge, staff cannot help students create resumes that clearly articulate all of their knowledge, skills and abilities, not just their technical skills! Most importantly, they need to articulate them in a manner that is meaningful to the employer.

Below are excerpts from two example resumes with critique from a Human Resources professional.

**EXAMPLE #1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 400 hours industrial manufacturing training and experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Multiple industry and safety certifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to work effectively in a fast paced environment, in team or self-directed settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Quick learning and adaptability with new skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Excellent communication and problem solving abilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CERTIFICATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Counterbalance 5/25k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Manufacturing Principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Aid/CPR with AED</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HR Professional’s Comments:**

1. The first bullet could be greatly enhanced by the addition of one word “400 hours industrial manufacturing training with hands-on experience.”

2. Why state “multiple industry and safety certificates” when they are listed below.

3. What is fast paced? Is it 2 parts per minute or 2 parts per ½ hour?
4. Can the applicant state clearly in the interview what they learned quickly and how they were able to adapt new skills? If not, then do not put it on the resume; you are setting them up for failure.

5. Make certain the applicant can clearly articulate the types of problems they have solved. Remember, they stated that they have excellent communication skills, it they cannot articulate in the interview, then that statement is false on the resume.

EXAMPLE #2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUMMARY: Certified Professional for the past 2 years offering compassionate care to help people heal so they can live a full life. I enjoy “being there” completing the duties of a CNA because I know this helps people.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CERTIFICATIONS &amp; SKILLS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certified Nursing Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPR/First Aid Certified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS Certification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Certification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HR Professional’s Comments:

1. I like the summary. Too often resumes come with “Career Goals.” As an employer, I am not interested in their career goals, I want to know what they are going to bring to my place of employment. This summary shows passion and commitment to being a CNA.

2. I like the clear list of certifications and the fact that they know that Microsoft Office products and typing are important skills for CNAs. However, there is no indication of other “employability skills.”

3. Career center staff need to teach students that it is “for the past two years” and not “for the past 2 years.” I see that as a writing skill issue. The same with “Certification & Skills.” Teach students not to use characters. It should read “Certifications and Skills.”

CAREER CENTER AND EMPLOYERS
If we want employers to see our college as their #1 resource for skilled employees, we need to make the career center not just about students, but also about employers. If you look carefully at the activities offered by career centers, isn’t it obvious that these would be most effective with employer input? How can you conduct an employment fair without employers? How can you advise students as to how to
write an effective resume without knowing what an employer expects? What are the essential skills that an employer seeks? Essentially, the Career Center should have a strategic employer engagement plan that parallels the college’s strategic plan. Staff should utilize the employer engagement checklist to answer these questions:

- How would the employer like to be engaged with the career center? What types of activities would they like to participate in?
- How does the Career Center staff connect with Advisory Boards and faculty?
- How do the Employers connect with the Career Center staff?

Given that an employer’s primary goal for establishing a business-education partnership is to bring skilled workers into their business, what can the career center offer to employers? What types or services does the center offer employers and how easy are they to access. As stated earlier, employers are busy and time is money. Thus, the secret to success is ease of access and services. A career center that serves employers will offer:

- The ability to post jobs on the college’s website with a clearly identified approval process and timeline.
- Links to employer’s websites on the college’s website.
- Identification of a single point of contact for the employer. This point of contact is responsible for reviewing the job posting, keeping the job board current and contacting the employer when problems or questions arise.
- Online registration for career fairs and a private place for employers to interview students during the career fair.
- A mechanism to providing feedback to faculty as to the readiness for employment of their students.

Employers who successfully find skilled workers are more likely to remain long-term partners with the college. The college benefits and students benefit!
EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT: THE BENEFIT TO STUDENTS
The National Association of Colleges and Employers surveys also asked students about the effectiveness of resources offered at their career center with regards to seeking potential employment. Clearly, having access to employer websites and employer representatives on campus are two of the most effective resources for students to learn about potential employers and jobs!

![Figure 17: Effectiveness of resources to learn about potential employers](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer websites</td>
<td>78.2%</td>
<td>71.9%</td>
<td>77.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer representatives on campus</td>
<td>65.7%</td>
<td>59.3%</td>
<td>66.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>63.0%</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
<td>61.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents and/or relatives</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
<td>59.3%</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty members</td>
<td>59.9%</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td>61.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer information presentations on campus</td>
<td>59.8%</td>
<td>54.9%</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career/job fairs</td>
<td>58.4%</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
<td>59.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni</td>
<td>54.7%</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social networking sites</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
<td>46.4%</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career services office</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
<td>57.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ads in job-search/recruitment publications</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer recruitment brochures (print)</td>
<td>44.5%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade/professional associations</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles in newspapers or magazines</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual career fairs</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONNECTING THE ENTIRE COLLEGE TO THE CAREER CENTER
CAREER CENTER AND FACULTY
We know that faculty play a very important role in assisting students in finding employment. Because of their relationships with their advisory committees, employers often call faculty first when looking for potential employees. Thus, it is critical that the college develop those feedback mechanisms to ensure that faculty and the career center are working in tandem.

When faculty get job postings or inquiries from employers, they should send the posting or inquiry to the career center. At the same time, they should tell their students about the posting and refer their students to the career center. Accordingly, students get support in preparing their resume and in preparing for the interview from professional staff! Concomitantly, when the career center gets postings or inquiries from employers, they should notify the faculty so that they can refer students. This two-way communication ensures that employers fill their open positions and students get jobs!
To improve career center and faculty relationships:

- Designate someone from the career center team to be the faculty contact.
- Use the checklist to combine career center employer contacts with the faculty employer contacts.
- Designate someone from the career center to present in classes on career center services.
- Ensure faculty participation in career fairs and provide for them the opportunity to network with the employers.

**Ease of Access: Career Center Location**

If we are truly committed to helping students attain employment, then the career center should be front and center and easy for students to access. To provide the best service to the most students your career center should be located in a high student traffic area and you should be making every effort necessary to ensure that students make access of the services offered. Location and usage of the space are both factors that play into your Career Centers success. Access ideas to consider:

- If the career center is not front and center, how good is your signage throughout your school letting students know where you are located?
- Do you post the career center location and hours in the class schedule?
- Is your career center on you college map?
- Is all of the above on the college website?

Concomitantly, how easy is it for students to find you career center and services on the website? How many clicks does it take? Is it buried somewhere under student services with a name that is not easily recognizable? How easy is it for employers to find the services offered in your career center? Clearly, career centers play a critical role in helping students find meaningful employment. Essentially, career centers can strengthen and expand programs that will enable all learners, local companies and, ultimately, communities, to prosper so ensuring their accessibility is paramount to their success.

**Closing Thoughts**

TAACCCT provides community colleges and other eligible institutions of higher education with funds to expand and improve their ability to deliver education and career training programs that can be completed in two years or less, are suited for workers who are eligible for training under the TAA for Workers program, and prepare program participants for employment in high-wage, high-skill occupations. Therefore, colleges need to truly understand the competencies and skills that employers
want and need to achieve growth and prosperity and to validate and ensure curriculum currency. Colleges also need to guarantee that their programs meet labor market demand and ensure jobs for students in their communities. Thus, engaging employers and providing comprehensive career services is essential to meeting the outcomes and deliverables required of the grant. This manual was designed to assist colleges in their employer engagement and in providing comprehensive career services to students. As stated numerous times throughout, the ultimate goal is to ensure that students achieve family wage employment and career success!
APPENDIX A
Example Employer Engagement Checklist
APPENDIX B
Bossier Parish Community College
Employer Engagement Best Practice Documents
The Twin Districts Workforce Investment Area serves as the Local Workforce Investment Board for an area that covers 24 counties in South Mississippi which also comprises the entire Pearl River Community College (PRCC) district. In this district, there are several Workforce Investment Network (WIN) Job Centers. WIN in Mississippi is an innovative strategy designed to provide convenient, one-stop employment and training services to employers and job seekers. Combining federal, state and community workforce programs and services into physical locations and electronic sites, WIN In Mississippi creates a system that is both convenient and user-friendly. Two important services are provided by the Twin Districts Area, a Dislocated Worker Coordinator and a WIN Computer and Job Skills Instructor; both employed by PRCC. The Dislocated Worker Coordinator works with individuals that enter the WIN Job Centers seeking career counseling and advice. These are people that are most often on unemployment benefits seeking skills, credentials and degrees offered by PRCC. They are offered financial aid services, Adult Basic Education, and other services that will assist them in enrolling in PRCC. The WIN Computer and Job Skills Instructor offers free computer, resume’ writing, and life skills classes onsite at the WIN Centers. This helps individuals who do not have the time, or desire, to actually enroll in college an opportunity to receive skills that can possibly lead to employment.
LOCATION AND POSITION APPLIED FOR______________________________________________________

**Employer Name** IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER. We adhere to a policy of making employment/volunteer/intern/extern decisions without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, citizenship, age or disability. We assure you that your opportunity for employment/volunteer/intern/extern with **Employer Name** depends solely on your qualifications.

The volunteer/intern/extern opportunity that we offer is of indefinite duration and will continue as long as both the volunteer/intern/extern and the company consider it of mutual benefit. Either the volunteer/intern/extern or the company is free to terminate the relationship at will and at any time. Any representations to the contrary that may have been made to the volunteer/intern/extern are unauthorized and are formally rescinded.

Signature of Applicant ____________________________ Date ________________

Name (Print): ___________________________________ First ____________________________

Last _____________________________________ Middle ____________________________

Street Address/City, State, Zip: ________________________________________________

Telephone #: ________________________________

Resume Attached: Yes ( ) No ( ) High School Graduate/GED: Yes ( ) No ( )

College Graduate: Yes ( ) No ( ) Circle Highest Grade Completed: 10, 11, 12, post graduate

**EDUCATION:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>From/To</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Credits/Degree/Certificate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If applying for an unpaid internship or externship please complete the information below

Name of school you are currently attending: ________________________________

Name of advisor responsible for supervising your internship/externship __________________________

Contact information for internship externship advisor (phone #)_____________________________
I hereby certify that this application contains no willful misrepresentation and that the information given by me is true and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief. I am aware that should investigation at any time disclose any misrepresentation or falsification, my application may be rejected or I may be dismissed from the program.

I understand that, as a condition of acceptance into the program as a volunteer/intern/extern I will be required to:

- List all items that must be adhered to prior to the start of the program (for example do you require a meeting with your school advisor or references)

- Provide a pre-program urinalysis test with negative results for all tested substances (only if this is done it with all employees)

I further understand that Name of Employer has a drug and alcohol policy that prohibits the use of drugs or alcohol, including the use of marijuana, while participating in any program or program sponsored event and that compliance with such policy is a condition of my program participation.

Signature of Applicant __________________________ Date _______________
APPENDIX E
Northeast Mississippi Internship Contract
APPENDIX F

Student Career Development Checklist

This checklist is your guide for making the job search process easier. The activities within each category don't need to be done in order. Just check them off as you go!

Career Exploration

- Take a career assessment
- Conduct an informational interview
- Meet with your academic advisor to develop your College Core Curriculum.
- Research occupations online
- Officially declare a major or decide what program you will be pursuing

Ongoing Activities

- Meet with a Career Center Advisor
- Explore part-time jobs (on or off-campus).
- Identify a career mentor.
- Attend Career Fairs and Festivals.
- Get involved in a student organization or volunteer experience.
- Update your resume regularly, and keep it posted on the Career Services Network.
- Have your resume reviewed
- Participate in a mock interview session
- Meet with your Career Advisor to review your resume & discuss job search strategies.
- Take on a Leadership role in a professional and/or student organization
- Discuss internships, and career opportunities with your career advisor, academic mentor and/or faculty
- Attend Career Services workshops and seminars
- Create your "Two-Minute Commercial."
- Select at least 3 references for job applications.
- Participate in mock interviews.
- Research employers.
- Update your resume regularly, and keep it posted on the Career Services Network.
- Participate in on-campus interviews.
APPENDIX G
Sample Survey questions for Career Centers

This is not an actual survey. It is a sample to assist if you decide to develop one for your center

Please complete the survey based on your experience(s) with Career Services Center. Thank you.

1) In the last 12 months how often have you visited career services, accessed its resources or used its services? List at least 4 choices from: Many times to Not at all or use numbers from 6 times to never.

2) If you have NOT used career services at all, indicate the reason(s) by checking the items below.
   • Not aware of services
   • Know what I want to do and how to do it
   • Not yet a priority for me
   • Getting help/advice from someone outside career services
   • My schedule has not allowed me enough time to use the service
   • Office seems uninviting
   • Inconvenient location
   • Inconvenient office hours
   • Heard career services isn’t very helpful
   • Services seem oriented to other majors/students
   • Services seem oriented to seniors
   • Always allow room for additional comments or giving them the choice of “other”

3) What would have motivated you to use the resources and services? Leave space for them to write a statement

4) Importance of Career Planning Services: How important to you is it to receive help with each of the following services? Give them choices from Very important to Not important for each choice
   • Help in understanding my interests, skills, personality strengths and values and relating them to career choices.
   • Help in finding and researching career, educational and employment information.
   • Help in establishing and planning career goals.
   • Help in exploring career options through field visits, informational interviews, internships, shadowing experiences, summer/part-time jobs, and/or cooperative education
5) How much did you learn through career services? Please select as many as are relevant
   • I learned how my interests, skills, values, experiences, personal characteristics, and/or lifestyle preferences relate to career choices.
   • I learned how to find career, educational, and employment information.
   • I learned about goal-setting and establishing career goals
     I learned how to explore career options through field visits, informational interviews, internships, shadowing experiences, summer/part-time jobs, and/or cooperative education.
   • I learned how to make informed career decisions based on knowledge of myself and the world of work.

6) Career Planning Services Used/Satisfaction: If you used services listed below, indicate your satisfaction with each by checking one of the ratings. You need to produce a rating scale that could look something like the below table for each area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Disappointed</th>
<th>Not at all satisfied</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Or you could use numbers 1 – 5 from most to least satisfied

• Discussion(s) with career counselor
• Self-assessment inventories (e.g. Career Occupational Preference System (COPS), Career Orientation Placement and Evaluation Survey (COPES))
• Computerized career guidance systems (e.g. SIGI+, Discover, and Focus)
• Career planning workshop/group
• Career planning course for credit
• Opportunity for career planning and exploration through career/major exploration resources (e.g. publications, computerized information, Web sites)
• Opportunity for career planning and exploration through special career exploration events (e.g. speakers, panels, roundtables with career professionals, career fairs)
• Opportunity for career planning and exploration through access to alumni and other working professionals to research careers
• Opportunity for career planning and exploration through visits to organizations
• Opportunity for career planning and exploration through internships, part-time/summer employment and/or cooperative education

7) Is there a career planning service that you would like to have offered by the career services office that was not available? If so, please comment: