Putting Experience to Work: Leveraging Student Attributes and Abilities in the Development of an Adult Learner Professional Readiness Experience Program

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A Climate for Change
facts

- **US Department of Education HEOA of 2008**
  - “The student’s satisfaction with the student’s preparation for such job and guidance provided with respect to securing the job”

- **Southern Association of Colleges and Schools**
  - “Institution provides student support programs, services, and activities consistent with its mission that promote student learning and enhance the development of its students”
Significant skills gap between student and employer perception of skill mastery (Chegg, 2013)

Experiential learning applies knowledge and conveys what does and doesn’t work in the real world (Pittaway and Cope, 2007)

The best preparation for the job market is a mix of classroom learning that can be applied in real world experience (Sellingo, 2015)
Initial Response to Higher Education Climate

- Professional Readiness Pledge created in 2014
  - “fully institutionalized commitment to professional readiness- helping all students discern their sense of purpose, discover their talents and interests, explore potential careers and cultivate necessary skills through experiential learning”

- Professional Readiness Experience (PRE) passed in April 2016 for Traditional Undergraduate Students
  - But what about adult learner needs?
Scope and Approach
Project Scope

**Impact on Organization**
- Multiple locations
- Numerous faculty/staff/students not centrally located

**Impact on Processes and Systems**
- Consideration of Adult Learners in programs and processes
- Access to services

**Impact on Boundaries**
- Faculty and Administration
- Needs of students
- Impact on community
- Perception of GWU
In alignment with the mission and vision of Gardner-Webb University, the Adult Learner Professional Readiness Experience Program seeks to provide professional development skills and major-specific job training for all students in the Degree Completion Program through the utilization of student work experience and existing content knowledge with new skills, knowledge acquisition and reflection gained in the student’s degree program of choice.
Adult Learner Professional Readiness Experience Program (AL-PREP)
Timeline of Work

- **Statement of Need**: December 2015
- **Project Scope**: Summer 2016
- **Report to DCP Council**: Fall 2016
- **Development of HUS Course**: Spring 2017
- **HUS Course starts**: Fall 2017
- **Policy Development** for full integration: December 2017
- **Policy Presentation**: Spring 2018
Risks, Constraints & Quality Assurance
## Risks and Constraints

- Technology
- Training Requirements
- Professional Readiness Content
- Program Sustainability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likely</th>
<th>Utilization of faculty outside Professional Development to teach the ALPREP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Possible</td>
<td>Possibility of major concerns arising because of lack of training on web-based tools with students or faculty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unlikely</td>
<td>Possibility of the ALPREP outliving its need within the DCP population</td>
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| Low Risk                   | Medium Risk                  | High Risk                  |
Quality Assurance Plan

- Demonstrate need
- Establish stakeholders
- Develop options relevant to Adult Learning
- Demonstrate value to students
- Connect to vision and marketing of organization
Results

- Implementation of HUS 304 Course
- Development of AL-PREP Policy
- Ready for future opportunities for adult learners
Reflection

SUCCESSES

● Passing of first integrated Professional Development Course, HUS 304
● Implementation of course
● Identification of professional readiness components in all DCP programs
● Holistic development of professional development resources
● Foundation set for professional development with adult learners
Reflection

**AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY**

- Use momentum and conversation to drive change
- Focus on buy-in and push for commitment
- Don’t expect everything to have a bow on it at the end
- Pause does not mean stop
Areas for Future Study

- Utilization of double-loop learning in addressing the “why” behind existing culture/systems
- Ability to share adult learner theory principles campus-wide
- Review of how professional readiness connects to adult learner admission, retention, and post-graduate success
- Possibility of resurfacing initiative
References


Questions?
HUS 304
Pre- and Post-Course Survey Data (n=51)
Malcolm Knowles

Principles of Andragogy

- Adult Learners need to be involved in their process
- Adult Learning is problem-centered not content-centered
- Adults look for immediately relevant information that can be applied to real life
- Experience (good and bad) is the lens used to view future learning
Peter Senge: Systems Theory

- **Systems Thinking** discusses connections within a system
- **Building a Shared Vision** through a common picture of “the future we seek to create”
- **Compensating Feedback** where interventions cause a response from the system that offsets the benefits
- **Collaboration and Knowledge Management** are two sides of the same
NACE Career Readiness Competencies

- Critical Thinking/Problem Solving
- Oral/Written Communication Skills
- Teamwork/Collaboration
- Digital Technology
- Leadership
- Professionalism/ Work Ethic
- Work Ethic
- Global/Intercultural Fluency
partnerships