WKU®

Toppers R·I·S·E

A ROADMAP TO INTEGRAL SKILLS & ENGAGEMENT

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WKU Quality Enhancement Plan

Title: Toppers R.I.S.E. – "A Roadmap to Integral Skills and Engagement"

Executive Summary
In recognition of the evolving demands of today's workforce, Western Kentucky University (WKU) is committed to enhancing the academic experience by ensuring that students acquire the essential competencies necessary for postgraduate success. Equally important is WKU's commitment to helping students understand how their coursework, including general education, is where they begin to work with and refine foundational skills that will prepare them for professional environments. Our institution's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), *"Toppers R.I.S.E., A Roadmap to Integral Skills and Engagement,"* aligns with the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education's state-wide project, The Kentucky Graduate Profile (KGP), and the National Association of Colleges and Employers' (NACE) vision for college graduates to exhibit career-focused outcomes each graduate should demonstrate as part of their college curriculum. By integrating a syllabus statement identifying which Transferable Skills are covered in each course of our general education curriculum, called the WKU Colonnade Program (The Colonnade), coupled with discussion and reflection on how those skills were developed within each course, we will assist students in finding greater value and purpose in their general education curriculum while also empowering students to excel in their chosen fields and contribute meaningfully to society. These skills are a set of career-focused learning outcomes that each WKU student should demonstrate as part of completing The Colonnade Program.

While WKU has made commendable progress in embedding the Transferable Skills employers consistently identify as essential for workplace success into The Colonnade Program, an equally important challenge remains that will be beyond the scope of this QEP: ensuring our students know their skillsets and can effectively articulate and demonstrate these skills to prospective employers. In their Spring 2025 Job Outlook Report, NACE shared that 67% of recruiters are doing skills-based screenings, which makes students' knowledge and communication of their skillset vital to secure employment after graduation.

Transferable Skills, also known as soft skills or core competencies, are abilities that are applicable across a wide range of careers and industries. These include, but are not limited to:

- **Critical thinking and problem-solving** – analyzing complex issues, evaluating evidence, and developing logical solutions.
- **Oral and written communication** – clearly expressing ideas in both spoken and written formats, tailored to different audiences.
- **Collaboration and teamwork** – working effectively with others in diverse and dynamic environments.
- **Adaptability and flexibility** – adjusting to new challenges, technologies, or work environments.
- **Leadership and initiative** – motivating others, taking responsibility, and driving projects forward.
- **Ethical reasoning and decision-making** – recognizing ethical issues and making principled choices.

- **Digital literacy** – using technology effectively and responsibly in professional settings.
- **Interpersonal communication** – understanding and respecting diverse perspectives and working across cultural boundaries.

These skills are intentionally woven throughout The Colonnade Program's coursework and learning outcomes. However, students' ability to *recognize*, *reflect on*, and *communicate* these competencies in real-world contexts is less apparent but critical for students' post-graduation success. In Fall 2024, oral and written communication and critical thinking were identified as "very important" and "critical for new hires" in a survey of local employers. While we will promote all the KGP skills through Toppers R.I.S.E., our focus for The Colonnade Program QEP will be on skills our local partners prioritized.

To bridge this gap between having the skills and being able to accurately articulate them, WKU is developing intentional strategies to help students translate their academic experiences into language that resonates with employers. These efforts will include:

Collaborating with faculty to align course assessments with real-world applications and employer expectations. Colonnade faculty will receive training on the Kentucky Graduate Profile's Transferable Skills and identifying those skills relevant to their courses, on preparing assignments using the Transparency in Learning and Teaching project (TILT), and on Cosby's (2014) Professionalism Competency Model (PCM) to incorporate skill-building activities and reflections into their courses and to communicate clear connections between what is being taught in the classroom and employability skills. Regular assessment will gauge student progress, and reflection opportunities will reinforce students' ability to communicate their skill development. Toppers R.I.S.E. will facilitate cross-institutional collaboration among faculty and advisors, sharing best practices and fostering innovation.

Integrating reflections that prompt students to connect course content with the career-relevant KGP skills is a powerful strategy for enhancing both learning and career readiness. These activities and assignments will encourage students to actively think about how the skillset they are developing—focusing on critical thinking and communication—applies beyond the classroom and into the professional world. By reflecting on their experiences, students begin to recognize the real-world value of their academic work within The Colonnade. These reflective exercises will not only deepen students' appreciation of general education coursework and understanding of course material but will hopefully carry forward to prepare them to articulate their competencies in résumés, interviews, and professional conversations. Ultimately, this practice empowers students after they complete The Colonnade to enter the internship or job market with a clearer sense of their strengths and a stronger ability to communicate their value to potential employers.

By reinforcing the connection between academic learning, especially in The Colonnade, and career readiness, WKU can provide opportunities for its students not only to develop the skills employers seek but also to confidently convey their value in a competitive job market.

Outcomes and Strategies

Expected Student Learning Outcomes
- *SLO1: By the end of The Colonnade program, at least 80% of students assessed will demonstrate competency in targeted KGP skills (critical thinking, written/oral communication) by achieving milestone level 3 or higher on artifacts assessed using the corresponding AAC&U LEAP VALUE rubrics.*
- *SLO2: By the end of The Colonnade program, at least 80% of students assessed will (1) report Early Application (level 3) or higher in targeted KGP skills (critical thinking, written/oral communication) on the NACE Career Readiness Student Competency Assessment, and (2) earn a score of 3 or higher on their written reflection of skill development as assessed using the KGP Reflection Scoring Rubric.*

Advising Strategies
Advisors will:
- Communicate to students the Transferable Skills covered in their Colonnade courses during advising sessions.
- Communicate to students the importance of working to achieve exposure to all the Transferable Skills through their selection of Colonnade courses.

Faculty Strategies
The Colonnade Program faculty will:
- Identify the curricular alignment between their course content and the Transferable Skills.
- Identify the level of development (introduce, develop, reinforce, mastery) of the Transferable Skills in their courses.
- Communicate the Transferable Skills covered in their Colonnade courses to students.
- Employ the methods of the Transparency in Learning and Teaching model and Cosby's (2014) Professionalism Competency Model (PCM), helping students understand how and why they are learning course content.

Topic Selection

Identification of the problem

Introduction

Whether referred to as essential skills, soft skills, or transferable skills, educators need to understand that students need a certain set of knowledge and abilities beyond those that are discipline-specific to respond to rapidly changing job markets. Fahimirad et al. (2019) defined soft skills as a set of personal attributes and social competencies that enable effective and affable interactions with others. These essential skills encompass communication, teamwork, problem-solving, decision-making, and collaboration. Tsaoussi (2020) further expanded this definition to include public good and civic capacities, such as creativity, leadership, and social responsibility. Soft skills are indispensable not only in professional environments but also in everyday life, as they enhance an individual's ability to perform their duties, collaborate effectively, and navigate diverse social contexts (Pachauri & Yadav, 2013). Unlike technical skills, which are specific and quantifiable, soft skills pertain to how individuals relate to and communicate with others. The development of these skills can result in improved relationships, enhanced job performance, and overall success in various domains. According to a 2019 survey by the National Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), 51% of respondents indicated that education systems have made minimal or no progress in addressing college graduates' lack of soft skills (Wilki, 2019). The most frequently cited deficiencies included the most frequently cited gaps, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, innovation and creativity, the ability to manage complexity and ambiguity, and communication skills. The 2025 NACE Job Outlook, Spring Update shared that 64% of job recruiters use skill-based screenings in their hiring process, and 77% consider whether students have "demonstrated proficiency in competencies" (p. 11). We will intentionally focus our work during Toppers R.I.S.E. on helping students to appreciate the value of the skillset that they are developing through their Colonnade coursework. Because we believe that good ideas are contagious, we hope the discussions of real-world applications that begin in The Colonnade will trickle down through the curriculum and into the program and majors, creating a culture of appreciating the unique skills offered in each course on a degree path.

Data Collection

One of the three key focuses of WKU's strategic plan is fostering strong relationships and involvement within our community, making it essential to include their voices. To achieve this, the team contacted the Bowling Green Chamber of Commerce for their perspective and to attain a list of major employers in the Bowling Green/Warren County area. The Chamber provided us with an illustration they drafted defining the job skills local employers are seeking, with a focus on globally minded individuals, lifelong learners, and those with emotional intelligence (Figure 1). Additionally, WKU distributed an "Employer Perceptions of New Hire College Graduates' Competencies" survey (see Appendix 1). In the first question of the survey, employers were asked to rank the university graduates' skills on a scale from 1 to 4 (1 = below average; 2 = average; 3 = good; 4 = above average). The majority of respondents rated graduates' skills as "average," indicating areas for improvement, and stated that proficiency in communication skills (91.7%) and critical thinking skills (83.3%) were the most critical for their new hires. In response to the open-

ended question, "What recommendations do you have for universities to better prepare students for the workforce?", employers highlighted general communication, problem-solving, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and real-world experience as top areas for enhancement. In other open-ended responses, participants also noted there was a gap between "real-world" situations and "book knowledge." Additionally, two of the top skills employers indicated as "very important" or "important" were communication and critical thinking.

The data from the Bowling Green Chamber of Commerce informed the approach for our QEP and allowed us to narrow from all ten KGP Skills to the two most in-demand by employers: critical thinking and communication. By understanding the specific skills employers value and seek in graduates, we can tailor our curriculum and support services to better prepare students for the workforce. The data allowed us to identify gaps in our current programs and develop targeted initiatives to enhance students' employability. Additionally, aligning our educational offerings with industry needs ensures that our graduates are competitive in the job market, fostering stronger partnerships with local businesses and enhancing the overall reputation of our institution. Ultimately, this approach helps us create a more relevant and impactful educational experience for our students.

Figure 1
The Ideal Graduate
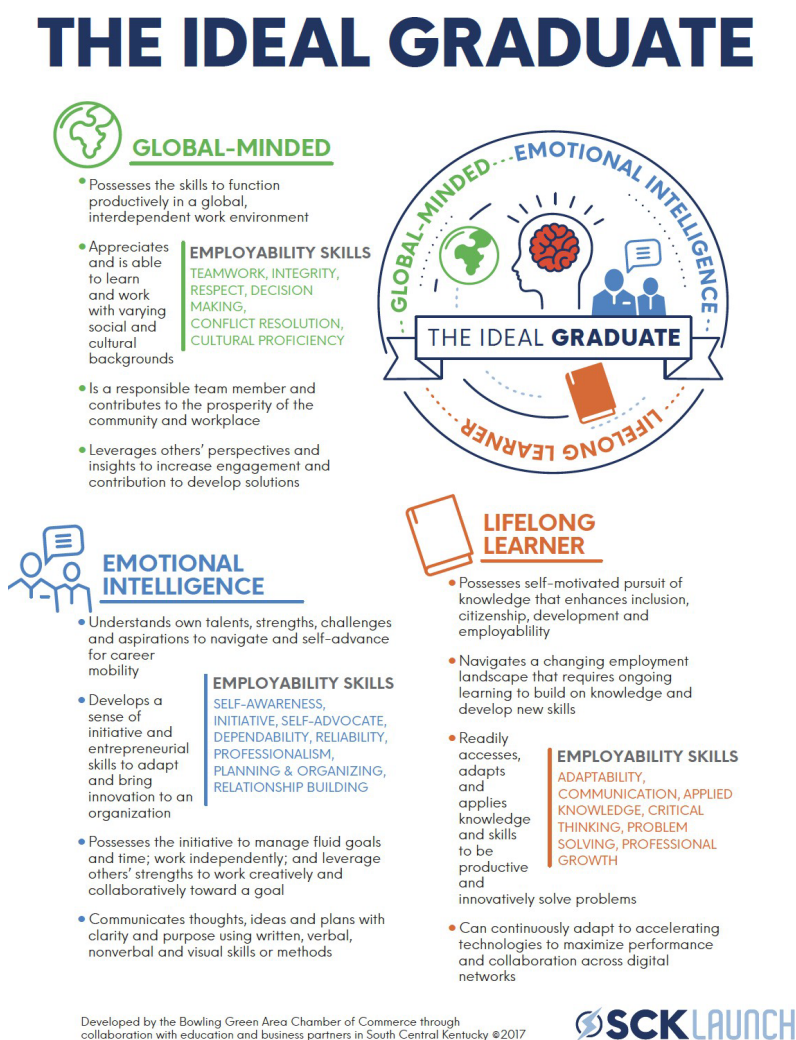
Narrowing our focus

As WKU reviewed both program-level and general education requirements for gaps in skills, it became evident that our Colonnade curriculum was designed to target Transferable Skills, and all WKU students are taking courses designed to develop the skills employers seek. However, in further investigations, the Career Development Center noted that students often struggle to report these skills on résumés and job applications and fail to articulate the connection between the job profile and their competencies during mock interviews. This aligns with employers' reports of needing to have better communication and critical thinking skills. Some experts argue that the real issue is not a "skills gap" but rather an "awareness gap" (Markowitz, 2017). This suggests that while college graduates often possess the necessary skills, they may struggle to effectively communicate these abilities on job applications, on résumés, and during interviews. This communication barrier can lead to a disconnect between their actual qualifications and how hiring managers perceive them.

While adjusting The Colonnade's curriculum in response to this data became a foundational element of the QEP, the core focus of this initiative is helping students to see the foundational purpose and value in their Colonnade Program coursework and the Transferable Skills the classes help students develop, as well as ensuring that faculty effectively communicate the connections between classroom learning and real-world applications. Faculty must highlight how course content translates to the complex, dynamic, and ever-changing workforce. This involves not only integrating practical examples and case studies into the curriculum but also emphasizing the relevance of academic skills in professional settings. By doing so, we aim to better prepare students for the workforce, ensuring they can confidently articulate their competencies and understand how their education aligns with industry demands while improving the sought-after critical thinking and communication competency at the same time.

Grounding in Previous Work

Introduction

WKU's 2015-2020 QEP, titled *Evidence & Argument*, emphasized the development of critical thinking skills and the ability of students to locate, evaluate, and synthesize scholarly and authoritative information. This focus aimed to enhance student performance and academic achievement throughout their university careers. According to a 2009 study by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) called *Raising the Bar: Employers' Views on College Learning in the Wake of the Economic Downturn*, 89% of employers surveyed felt that "the ability to effectively communicate orally and in writing" was a learning outcome inadequately addressed by American colleges and universities. Additionally, 81% of employers indicated that "critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills" needed greater emphasis; 75% were dissatisfied with graduates' ability to "analyze and solve complex problems," and 68% desired better preparation in locating, organizing, and evaluating information from multiple sources (Hart Research Associates, 2010).

The implementation and institutionalization of the *Evidence & Argument* initiative highlighted the benefits of courses focused on critical thinking and information literacy. As modern political rhetoric and debates have become integral to American discourse, the landscape of media and

information sources has shifted dramatically. Today, students, especially those of traditional college age, are more inclined to consume information via social media rather than through major networks or print publications. Unfortunately, social conflict, public debates, propaganda, and "fake news" hinder the development of civil thinking and information literacy, complicating the process of critically gathering evidence to form rational arguments. Additionally, college students often find it challenging to locate fact-based information for their projects, reports, and analyses.

To address the consumption and spread of ambiguous, distorted, or deceptive communication, WKU's QEP aimed to integrate educational pedagogy into The Colonnade to enhance information and civic literacy.

What We Learned

Evidence & Argument allowed faculty and staff to play an active role in shaping meaningful curriculum and work across disciplines to align learning outcomes within The Colonnade. One of the most important lessons learned from the QEP was the value of meaningful assessment and the need to consistently reinforce and reevaluate student learning in relation to outcomes. The collected data revealed gaps in The Colonnade and a need to scaffold learning more effectively. In addition, a meaningful systematic assessment examines learning and enables identification of strategies that maximize the achievement of outcomes. The impact on student learning and the environment supporting student learning were examined annually in alignment with the goals and student learning outcomes (SLOs) of the plan. The plan renewed the institutional commitment to critical thinking and assisted in cultivating a community of scholars, reshaping the way the University viewed assessment. To build effective programs, it is prudent to start simply before adding layers of complexity and to employ a data-driven curriculum design. Using these principles as a guide, the utility of implementing the QEP one step at a time and adjusting the assessment along the way ensured the initiatives were achieving the desired goals. This approach helped to maintain a manageable and meaningful assessment plan, expand initiatives, and determine how evidence-gathering, sense-making, and argumentation should be institutionalized.

The next phase will use the framework of the 2025-2030 QEP to reexamine the structure of the general education program and how critical thinking as well as other Transferable Skills can be embedded into every student's degree path through The Colonnade. The data collected for our 2015-2020 QEP indicated a congruence between Foundation and Explorations courses in teaching Transferable Skills, such as critical thinking skills, but some tuning in Connections courses is necessary.

Selecting a topic that is well aligned with the institutional mission, values, and culture contributes to fast-paced growth and institutional "buy-in." Faculty and staff have embraced Toppers R.I.S.E. because they understand the impact of Transferable Skills on student learning and because it fits well with WKU's institutional values and strategic plan goal to serve "our community and beyond." It is imperative to note that efforts like the Topper R.I.S.E. work best when faculty and staff take ownership of an initiative. An established community of practice will become central to the success of the plan because it can champion adjustments to courses in the Colonnade curriculum, help lead workshops, identify areas in need of help, mentor each other, exchange ideas, and create interdisciplinary projects to require connections among the Transferable Skills.

Institutional Goals

Strategic Plan

WKU's 2018-2028 strategic plan "recognizes the need for WKU to be intentional in using partnerships with the communities that surround us, to be actively engaged in elevating the economies in those communities, and to build the talent pipeline that will fuel the future workforce for the commonwealth." Equally important is our dedication to offering a global perspective within the WKU Experience, both on campus and around the world:

As the commonwealth's premier student-centered, applied research university, WKU's energy and resources must be focused first on meeting the obligations to the region we were built to serve. WKU will engage actively and take a leadership role in conversations regarding economic, environmental, and cultural development within our service region. University faculty, staff, and students will influence these conversations through scholarly activities, outreach, service, and applied research. Along with regional partners, WKU will lead efforts to develop and grow the communities we serve using data, research, and forward-thinking policies; and through partnerships with K-12 education, business, industry, and government leaders, we will work together to provide a talent pipeline for the future.

From our Hill in Kentucky, our reach will be international in scope, ensuring that our students and the region are fully prepared and able to compete in a global market. Committed to creating an environment where individuals from around the world will come to study, we also will continue to cultivate an environment that attracts individuals from every part of the globe to study and teach at WKU (Western Kentucky University).

Structure

The Kentucky Graduate Profile and WKU's Colonnade Program

Our preliminary Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) journey unfolded as WKU connected the state-wide initiative, The Kentucky Graduate Profile (KGP), and The Colonnade, WKU's general education program.

The Kentucky Graduate Profile
The Kentucky Graduate Profile (KGP) and the National Association of Colleges and Employers' (NACE) vision for college graduates is to exhibit career-focused outcomes as part of their college curriculum. These outcomes are essential, Transferable Skills that every WKU student should exhibit upon graduation.

The 10 Transferable Skills and broad outcomes include:

1. Effective Communication: Graduates will master clear and professional communication, both written and verbal. They will learn to express ideas coherently and actively listen to others.

2. Critical Thinking and Creativity: Graduates will evaluate assumptions, analyze information, and generate innovative solutions. They'll combine ideas in original ways to address complex issues.

3. Quantitative Reasoning: Graduates will apply data-driven approaches to solve numerical problems, making informed decisions.

4. Interpersonal Communication: Graduates will demonstrate both self-awareness and appreciation of people from other backgrounds, as well as the ability to collaborate, communicate, and work respectfully with others.

5. Adaptability and Leadership: Graduates will thrive in changing environments, lead others, and motivate teams toward common goals.

6. Professionalism: Graduates will adhere to ethical standards, act with integrity, manage time effectively, and demonstrate accountability.

7. Civic Engagement: Graduates will actively participate in political and social activities, contributing to positive societal change.

8. Collaboration: Graduates will have numerous opportunities to collaborate with colleagues, become effective team members, and manage conflict.

9. Applied and Integrated Learning: Graduates will be able to articulate and apply the theoretical content of their academic preparation with relevant knowledge and abilities transferable to their chosen career.

10. Informed Decision Making: Graduates will be able to identify, evaluate, and responsibly use information needed for decision making.

The Colonnade Program

As the heartbeat of Toppers R.I.S.E., The Colonnade serves as the epicenter where the liberal arts meet practical skills. WKU has woven the Kentucky Graduate Profile's (KGP) 10 Essential Skills' learning outcomes into the general education program and sequentially embedded general education seamlessly into every program. The Colonnade will become a gateway to holistic growth and student success across all units and programs. The Colonnade is more than a collection of introductory courses. It is the core of our academic curriculum. Shared by every student across all programs of study, it transcends disciplinary boundaries. However, students often do not see the value of general education coursework. By design, the structure of The Colonnade is scaffolded so students can use each category (Foundations, Explorations, and Connections) as a building block for the next. Foundation courses are designed to provide students with effective communication skills, critical and creative thinking skills, and quantitative reasoning skills. Using the more concrete skills acquired in Foundations, Explorations courses introduce more complex skills like leadership, professionalism, cultural competence, and civic engagement. Finally, Connections courses prompt students to engage in reflective dialogues and consider their WKU journey up to

that point and forward to a future of lifelong learning. Connections courses are not just about acquiring knowledge; they are about becoming curious, adaptable, and intellectually agile. In this category, students use prior knowledge gained to collaborate and work in teams, demonstrate evidence of applied and integrated learning, and use information for decision making. The Colonnade is not prescribed; it evolves with our students, nurturing their intellectual curiosity and preparing them for a world that demands more than rote memorization. It is not just about fulfilling requirements; The Colonnade is about igniting a passion for learning that continues beyond graduation by allowing students to select from a range of courses that meet their degree program's needs and align with their interests, as well.

The Colonnade Program Structure

As outlined in our strategic plan, Western Kentucky University (WKU) stands as a "beacon of learning, an incubator of innovation, and a lighthouse for the community." Our commitment to student success is unwavering and ignites "the climb" as students embark on a transformative journey—a journey that transcends traditional boundaries and elevates the educational experience for every Hilltopper. The Colonnade offers a scaffolded approach to general education: Foundations, Explorations, and Connections (Figure 2).

Figure 2

The Tiers of The Colonnade Program
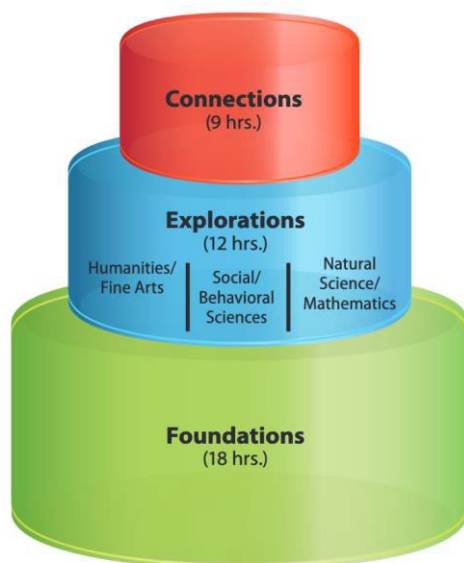
WKU's Colonnade Program addresses 24 statewide student learning outcomes for general education, as well as nine institutional outcomes designed to provide a culminating assessment of student learning throughout the general education program. Each of these outcomes is aligned with one or more American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) Transferable Learning Outcomes. The LEAP outcome categories are:
    a.   Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Natural and Physical World

b. Intellectual and Practical Skills
c. Personal and Social Responsibility Integrative Learning

The statewide student learning outcomes for general education are incorporated into Foundations and Explorations courses; Connections courses address additional student learning outcomes, unique to WKU, that are designed to integrate discipline-specific knowledge and skills with the significant issues arising from our individual and shared responsibility as global citizens. Key tenets underlying The Colonnade's organization are those of: (1) progression, emphasizing continuing development of students' fundamental skills throughout their entire course of study; (2) perspective, exposing students to different ways of knowing and/or seeing the world and themselves; (3) connection, which intentionally involves students integrating knowledge across disciplines; and (4) application, whereby the general education experience provides students with opportunities to examine and engage in issues at the local, national, and international level. Foundations courses ensure that students begin their education with the practical and intellectual skills necessary for college success and lifelong learning, including written and oral communication, quantitative reasoning, and evaluation of the artifacts of human expression and experience. Explorations courses introduce students to discipline-specific concepts, theories, methodologies, and practices that provide a variety of ways to know and understand the world. Connections courses direct students to apply and integrate skills attained through Foundations courses with discipline-specific knowledge and context addressed across the breadth of Explorations courses; the intent is for students to examine significant issues challenging our individual and shared responsibility as global citizens. Connections courses thus provide a capstone experience for The Colonnade. Table 1 illustrates the relationship of these courses to the tier.

Table 1

The Colonnade Program Requirements

Title of Tiers	Credit Hours Required	Description, Code & Credit Hours
Foundations	18	College Composition (WC) (3) Writing in the Disciplines (WC) (3) Human Communications (OC) (3) Quantitative Reasoning (QR) (3) Literary Studies (AH) (3) World History (SB) (3)
Explorations	12	Arts & Humanities (AH) (3) Social & Behavioral Sciences (SB) (3) Natural & Physical Sciences (NS) (3) NS with lab (SL) (3)

Connections	9	Social and Cultural (3) Local to Global (3) Systems (3) International Experience (3) *Courses must be from 3 separate disciplines.

Table 2 indicates the number of Colonnade hours needed for an associate degree:

Table 2
Associate Degree General Education Requirements

Category Description & Content Code	Credit Hours
College Composition (WC)	3
Arts & Humanities (AH)	3
Social & Behavioral Sciences (SB)	3
Quantitative Reasoning (QR) OR Natural & Physical Sciences (NS)	3
One Course either Foundations OR Explorations	3

While the Colonnade Program is scaffolded by categories, aside from prerequisite courses, there is no order in which the courses are required to be taken. Foundations and Explorations courses are often intermingled on a student's schedule, but students must have completed 21 hours of Foundations and Explorations courses before enrollment in Connections courses, or they must have Junior status (90 credit hours earned or more).

Relationship to The Kentucky Graduate Profile

WKU strives to prepare students not only for their chosen fields but also for life beyond the classroom. The WKU Colonnade Program, with its emphasis on foundational knowledge, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary exploration, mirrors this commitment. Simultaneously, NACE and the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education state-wide project, The Kentucky Graduate Profile (KGP), sets forth the Transferable Skills aspiring graduates should achieve at our public institutions.

In our pursuit of preparing well-rounded graduates, Kentucky's public institutions recognize the importance of specific proficiencies. These skills serve as the bedrock for success in various fields and have been identified by employers nationally as necessary for workplace success. To achieve this, we started by exploring the synergy between WKU's Colonnade Program categories and their learning outcomes and the 10 Essential Skills as outlined by the KGP. By aligning these two frameworks, we uncover how WKU's general education curriculum nurtures these Transferable Skills. As part of the CPE's Kentucky Graduate Profile Academy, a delegation of faculty and staff was selected to attend several required workdays at CPE throughout the year to draft supporting initiatives. These teams were tasked with exploring how the KGP's 10 Essential

Skills could potentially map to current programs and their corresponding learning outcomes. This crosswalk enabled the WKU QEP leadership and workgroup to begin conceptualizing the task of mapping the Colonnade courses they teach to the KGP's 10 Essential Skills.

We share this crosswalk below as a historical reference to the origins of the Toppers R.I.S.E. basic concepts and hope to use it as a starting point for discussions on how Colonnade courses might be mapped to the Toppers R.I.S.E. Transferable Skills. We recognize that these alignments are just starting points and plan to refine them through campus-wide discussions during the first year of QEP implementation.

The Colonnade categories and their corresponding learning outcomes were mapped, as a starting point, to the KGP's 10 Essential Skills through the appropriate crosswalk below:

1. ***Effective Communication***: These courses focus on mastering the art of expressing themselves coherently—whether through eloquent prose, persuasive speeches, or engaging presentations.
   Colonnade Crosswalk: Human Communication (OC)
   Human Communication courses develop foundational skills of critical listening, speaking, and presentation in a variety of social and cultural contexts. Students will learn to analyze arguments and to communicate ideas clearly and effectively in oral and written formats. Students will demonstrate the ability to:
   - Listen and speak competently in a variety of communication contexts, which may include public, interpersonal, and/or small-group settings.
   - Find, analyze, evaluate, and cite pertinent primary and secondary sources, including academic databases, to prepare speeches and written texts.
   - Identify, analyze, and evaluate statements, assumptions, and conclusions representing diverse points of view, and construct informed, sustained, and ethical arguments in response.
   - Plan, organize, revise, practice, edit, and proofread to improve the development and clarity of ideas.

2. ***Critical Thinking***: These courses focus on evaluating assumptions and synthesizing information. Our Hilltoppers will be adept problem solvers and creative thinkers. Colonnade *Crosswalk: Arts and Humanities (AH)*
   Students analyze concepts, theories, methodologies, and practices from the arts and humanities to interpret the human experience through literary, visual, and performing arts. Courses offer opportunities for students to explore cultural expressions and enduring questions about human experience. Students will demonstrate the ability to:
   - Utilize basic formal elements, techniques, concepts, and vocabulary of specific disciplines within the Arts and Humanities.
   - Distinguish between various kinds of evidence by identifying reliable sources and valid arguments.
   - Demonstrate how social, cultural, and historical contexts influence creative expression in the arts and humanities.
   - Evaluate the significance of human expression and experience in shaping larger social, cultural, and historical contexts.
   - Evaluate enduring and contemporary issues of human experience.

3. *Quantitative Reasoning*: These courses focus on using data to make informed decisions and solve real-world problems.
   Colonnade Crosswalk: Quantitative Reasoning (QR)
   Quantitative Reasoning courses teach students to interpret, illustrate, and communicate mathematical and/or statistical ideas. Students will learn to model and solve problems. Students will demonstrate the ability to:
   - Interpret information presented in mathematical and/or statistical forms.
   - Illustrate and communicate mathematical and/or statistical information symbolically, visually and/or numerically.
   - Determine when computations are needed and execute the appropriate computations.
   - Apply an appropriate model to the problem to be solved.
   - Make inferences, evaluate assumptions, and assess limitations in estimation modeling and/or statistical analysis.

4. *Interpersonal Skills*: These courses focus on appreciating diversity, interacting seamlessly with people from varied backgrounds, and collaborating across borders.
   Colonnade Crosswalk: Social and Behavioral Sciences (SB)
   Students explore the human experience using theories and tools of the social and behavioral sciences. Courses require students to analyze problems and conceptualize the ways in which these theories and tools inform our understanding of the individual and society. Students will demonstrate the ability to:
   - Demonstrate knowledge of at least one area of the social and behavioral sciences.
   - Apply knowledge, theories, and research methods, including ethical conduct, to analyze problems pertinent to at least one area of the social and behavioral sciences.
   - Understand and demonstrate how at least one area of the social and behavioral sciences conceptualizes diversity and the ways it shapes human experience.
   - Integrate knowledge of at least one area of the social and behavioral sciences into issues of personal or public importance.
   - Communicate effectively using the language and terminology germane to at least one area of the social and behavioral sciences.

5. *Adaptability & Leadership*: These courses will focus on skills for thriving in shifting landscapes, leading and supporting others with resilience, and inspiring others toward common goals guided by empathy and vision.
   Colonnade Crosswalk: Connections - Local to Global
   Students will examine local and global issues within the context of an increasingly interconnected world. Courses will consider the origins and dynamics of a global society, the significance of local phenomena on a global scale, and/or material, cultural, and ethical challenges in today's world. Students who complete this course will:
   - Analyze issues on local and global scales.
   - Examine the local and global interrelationships of one or more issues.
   - Evaluate the consequences of decision-making on local and global scales.

6. *Professionalism*: Displaying integrity, ethics, and accountability within their chosen fields.
   Colonnade Crosswalk: Writing in the Disciplines (WC)

(Note: Professionalism in the discipline will be covered in each major; these courses supplement the disciplines.) The Colonnade courses associated with Writing in the Disciplines provide advanced instruction and practice in professional written communication within an academic discipline. In this course, students become aware of how disciplinary conventions and rhetorical situations call for different choices in language, structure, format, tone, citation, and documentation. Students conduct investigations into writing and reading conventions in their fields and receive advanced instruction in planning, drafting, arranging, revising, and editing discipline-specific essays. Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- Write clear and effective prose in several forms, using conventions appropriate to the audience (including academic audiences), purpose, and genre.
- Find, analyze, evaluate, and cite pertinent primary and secondary sources, including academic databases, to prepare written texts.
- Identify, analyze, and evaluate statements, assumptions, and conclusions representing diverse points of view, and construct informed, sustained, and ethical arguments in response.
- Plan, organize, revise, practice, edit, and proofread to improve the development and clarity of ideas.
- Distinguish among various kinds of evidence by identifying reliable sources and valid arguments.

7. ***Civic Engagement***: In these courses, students will actively participate in shaping society, addressing pressing issues, and leaving a positive impact.
   Colonnade Crosswalk: Connections-International Experience (C-IE) (Note: This will be redesigned in 2025 to go beyond international experiences and include internships, civic engagement, and other types of work outside of the classroom.) Students who complete these courses will:
   - Articulate the relationship between ideas, experiences, and place.
   - Develop tools to engage with diverse people in the local cultures.
   - Explore other peoples' values and clarify their own.

8. ***Collaboration***: In these courses, students will learn to work successfully in teams with varying group dynamics and differences.
   Colonnade Crosswalk: Connections - Social and Cultural (C-SC)
   Students will investigate ways in which individuals shape, and are shaped by, the societies and cultures within which they live. Courses will consider the ethical questions and shared cultural values that shape societal norms and behaviors, the independent and collective or collaborative artistic expression of those values, and/or the role of social and cultural institutions in developing and sustaining norms, values, and beliefs. Students who complete this course will:
   - Examine diverse values that form civically engaged, informed members of society.
   - Analyze the development of self in relation to others in society.
   - Evaluate solutions to real-world socio-cultural problems.

9. ***Applied and Integrated learning***: In these courses, students will engage in making connections among concepts and experiences so that information and skills can be applied to novel and complex issues or challenges.
   Colonnade Crosswalk: Connections – Systems (CS)

Students will examine systems, whether naturally occurring or created by humans, by breaking them down into their component parts or processes and seeing how these parts interact. Courses will consider the evolution and dynamics of a particular system or systems and the application of system-level thinking. Students who complete this course will:

- Compare the study of individual components to the analysis of entire systems.
- Analyze how systems evolve.
- Evaluate how system-level thinking informs decision-making. (For example: public policy, political landscapes, economic structures, cultural phenomena, etc.)

10. ***Data-informed decision making***: In these courses, students will use data-driven metrics to make decisions without bias or emotion.
Colonnade Crosswalk: Literary Studies (AH)
(Note: This is a hypothetical, reimagined Colonnade category in Foundations dedicated to the broader notion of literacy [e.g., health literacy, information literacy, data literacy, civic literacy]. Currently, the category is narrowly defined within the boundaries of arts and humanities but could be expanded to cover a wider definition of the term "literacy.") Current description:
Literary Studies courses introduce a variety of literature at the college level. Assignments encourage critique and analysis and give students introductory knowledge of key literary terms, concepts, and reading strategies. Students apply this knowledge in discussing and writing about literary texts and consider how literature inscribes the human experience. Because these classes emphasize the reading of primary texts, instructors will focus on literacy skills to supplement content coursework.
Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- Utilize basic formal elements, techniques, concepts, and vocabulary of specific disciplines within the Arts and Humanities.
- Distinguish among various kinds of evidence by identifying reliable sources and valid arguments.
- Demonstrate how social, cultural, and historical contexts influence creative expression in the Arts and Humanities.
- Evaluate the significance of human expression and experience in shaping larger social, cultural, and historical contexts.
- Evaluate enduring and contemporary issues of human experience.
- Read, comprehend, and analyze primary texts independently and proficiently.

QEP Strategic Vision

Toppers R.I.S.E. represents a bold commitment by Western Kentucky University (WKU) to its graduates. It goes beyond mere planning; it embodies a promise to empower every WKU graduate with the skills, mindset, and attributes needed for success in their personal and professional lives through recognizing and reflecting on the skills they develop through both The Colonnade Program and their degree path of choice. The vision is to cultivate well-rounded individuals who not only excel academically but also contribute positively to their communities and the world.

The Kentucky Graduate Profile (KGP) outlines the transferable competencies and qualities that

every graduate from a Kentucky educational institution should possess. These competencies go beyond subject-specific knowledge and include broader skills and dispositions.

How Toppers R.I.S.E. Supports the Vision:
- **R - Roadmap**: The "Roadmap" component emphasizes the importance of having a clear path or plan for skill development and personal growth. It represents the strategic direction that all WKU students follow to achieve their goals.
- **I - Integral**: The "Integral" part of the vision involves combining knowledge and skills from various disciplines and encouraging students to see the interconnectedness of diversity of thought in others to apply a holistic approach to problem-solving. In short, it is how to weave together different threads of understanding to create a stronger fabric of knowledge.
- **S - Skills**: The "Skills" component focuses on developing specific abilities, competencies, and proficiencies. It encompasses both hard skills (technical expertise) and soft skills (communication, teamwork, adaptability, etc.).
- **E - Engagement**: Experiential learning involves hands-on experiences, internships, co-ops, and other practical opportunities. It allows students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings. Through hands-on learning, students gain valuable insights, develop skills, and build confidence.

Through the coordinated efforts of faculty and advisors, students will be able to see more clearly how the KGP skills are introduced, practiced, and refined in both their Colonnade course choices and the coursework in their majors. Through working with student activities, student employment, and other campus entities, students will also see how the KGP skills are present in other activities they engage in on campus. Our goal is that students will not only be able to meet employers' needs by having these skills, but also be able to communicate which skills they have and at what levels. In addition, students will identify which coursework led to this development.

Review of the Literature

Introduction

In recent years, a vast body of literature has emerged around the concept of the "future of work," driven by dynamic discussions from academics, think tanks, and policymakers. Labor markets in both developing and developed countries are expected to undergo significant transformations in the coming decades, influenced by factors such as emerging technologies, societal shifts, and economic changes. Scholars have identified major trends, including automation, remote work, and the rise of the gig economy, as pivotal forces reshaping employment landscapes.

While some predict widespread job displacement due to advancements in AI and robotics (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014), others highlight the potential for new opportunities through reskilling and continuous learning (Bessen, 2019). Understanding the multiple futures of work requires a focus on key labor market dimensions, particularly the technological disruptions, evolving remote and hybrid work models, labor market transformations, and the increasing demand for "soft" skills. By synthesizing these insights, the literature continues to build a more comprehensive picture of the profound shifts anticipated in the future of work and the notion of human capital.

Higher education institutions face increasing expectations to produce graduates who can adeptly address contemporary challenges through innovative problem-solving. Policymakers and employers have consistently advocated for investing in skills-based education to enhance resilience and facilitate recovery from economic crises (Okay-Somerville & Scholarios, 2019), and as previously shared, 64% of today's recruiters do skills-based screenings (NACE, 2025). Corporate and private industries reinforce this by seeking professionals who can meet the requirements of emerging markets and trends, including technological advances and generative AI (Knight & Yorke, 2003). Higher education institutions, however, often receive criticism for not adequately preparing graduates for the practical realities of their professions. Consequently, graduate employability has become a central concern driving the missions and visions of our institutions. To address these challenges, colleges and universities have implemented various strategies, including developing, enhancing, or consolidating career services, integrating employability skills into curricula; promoting extracurricular activities; facilitating networking and internship opportunities with employers; supporting students' leadership and entrepreneurial development; encouraging global competence; and cultivating and embedding critical thinking in their overall learning experiences (Schwab, 2018). In summary, these initiatives enable higher education institutions to construct an institutional narrative centered around employability.

According to Causevic (2022), it is important to note that the terms "employability" and "career readiness" are, by definition, interchangeable, but the latter is most often used in higher education because, to practitioners, a college education goes beyond merely getting a job. Instead, the phrase is widely employed in the literature to describe the same concept. ACTE recognizes "career readiness skills," such as critical thinking and social responsibility, referring to the fundamental academic abilities that allow students to apply their knowledge to real-world situations, both in the workplace and daily life, hence the growing interest in career readiness within post-secondary institutions.

The Colonnade Program at WKU was designed to allow students to develop the foundational skills required to learn the specific disciplinary tools and skillsets needed to succeed in their chosen fields. Toppers R.I.S.E. seeks to emphasize key skills that both local employers and employers nationally say are most needed in their new employees, with a focus on communication and critical thinking.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Human capital refers to the collective knowledge and skills of citizens and remains the United States' most vital resource. Developing human capital requires a national high-performing educational system for maintaining and enhancing necessary skills. Unfortunately, one-sixth of U.S. adults lack a high school diploma, 40% of high school graduates are academically underprepared, and only about 60% of college students earn a degree within six years (Palmer, 2024). The situation is further exacerbated by rising costs and declining revenues, which worsen the already critical state of human capital, making it difficult to address social and economic inequalities (Savić, 2020). This scenario exemplifies what political economists describe as a "common pool problem" (CPP) (Schweizer & Juhola, 2024). When higher education is treated as a public good, the CPP leads to significant distortions in the production and consumption of undergraduate education. When the CPP becomes more severe, as seen in today's postsecondary education landscape, bold action is necessary to prevent it from becoming a permanent crisis, or "tragedy of the commons" (Benjamin, 2011). What remains uncertain is whether higher education can solve this issue before it is too late. While some selective colleges and research universities may remain unaffected due to their prestige, most institutions will feel the impact. The long-term concern is that the undergraduate CPP could become a permanent crisis, marked by insufficient resources and a lack of political will to resolve it (Schweizer & Juhola, 2024).

Given the size and significance of the postsecondary CPP, there is an urgent need to establish comprehensive general education programs focused on the communication of skills necessary to lead the future. A primary goal should be to develop pedagogies, including communication of skills development, that faculty can seamlessly integrate into their teaching. These teaching methods can also help shed some light on the true costs of student learning, identify best practices, and evaluate the effectiveness of accountability systems. Central to this is the notion that fostering collaboration among experts in multi- and transdisciplinary pedagogy contributes to our understanding of how people learn. Faculty from various disciplines must play a crucial role in this initiative.

The first step in tackling the postsecondary CPP is acknowledging its existence. Leaders from both within and outside higher education must collaborate to restructure postsecondary education, ensuring it provides all citizens the opportunity to maximize their potential by enhancing their knowledge and skills. This will require a renewed emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning and likely substantial restructuring across the postsecondary sector.

In higher education, our central focus is the transference of knowledge from experts/faculty to learners. Since there is an exchange of goods/services involved in this relationship, knowledge transfer through education is a commodity. Commodification has been a central process in

capitalist market economies and has increasingly included various forms of knowledge for decades as part of capitalism's expansion. To understand knowledge, both epistemological and ontological, as a commodity, it is important to envision knowledge as a public good. A significant portion of the knowledge transferable for successful development is not development of tasks, products, or processes but rather foundational nuances like organizational membership, active and informed citizenship, living healthier lives in environmentally supportive ways, understanding through collaboration and communication, and designing economies that foster growth. In educational institutions, this brand of knowledge is gained through general courses, in-class and out-of-class activities, and experiential learning. And delving into the future, knowledge extends beyond collecting best practices and successful anecdotes; it involves analyzing why certain sets of solutions are effective in some situations but not in others (Stiglitz, 1999). Using the connections among systems, design, and futures thinking serves as the foundation for situating Topper R.I.S.E. not only in theoretical frameworks, but practical applications as well.

Systems Thinking

Peter Senge, a leading authority in organizational development, is renowned for his pioneering ideas on the learning organization. Senge's (1990) landmark book, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, suggests that organizations/institutions must engage in continuous learning and adaptation to thrive in an ever-changing environment. Central to Senge's philosophy is the concept of systems thinking, which he identifies as the "fifth discipline" that unifies the other four: personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, and team learning. Systems thinking provides a framework for understanding the interconnectedness of various elements within a system, rather than viewing them as isolated cause-and-effect relationships. It highlights the importance of seeing the whole picture and recognizing patterns and connections that may not be immediately apparent. This approach enables organizations to pinpoint leverage points where targeted actions can lead to significant and lasting improvements. By incorporating systems thinking, organizations, including universities, can better manage complexity, avoid unintended consequences, and develop more sustainable and effective solutions.

Higher education plays a crucial role in systems thinking by fostering a holistic understanding of complex systems and their interconnections that goes beyond knowledge of a particular field. In the context of higher education, systems thinking encourages educators, administrators, and students to view educational institutions not as isolated entities but as parts of a larger, interconnected system. This perspective helps in identifying and addressing the root causes of issues rather than just their symptoms. For example, systems thinking in higher education can lead to more effective decision-making by considering the broader impacts of policies and practices. Employing systems thinking in the curriculum can assist in aligning school initiatives, improving instructional methods, increasing operational efficiency, and enhancing student outcomes. By closely monitoring and analyzing student data, administrators can make informed adjustments to budgets and resources, ensuring that the most critical needs are met (American University, 2020). Additionally, systems thinking promotes collaboration across different departments and disciplines, fostering a more integrated and cohesive approach to embedding workforce-ready skills into the curriculum (Sanders & Ferrall, 2021). This holistic view is transferable for preparing students to navigate and address the complexities of the real world, ultimately contributing to a more sustainable and effective educational system. Systems thinking is about understanding and

optimizing the broader system's dynamics and interconnections, and Toppers R.I.S.E. will use this lens to help students find greater value in their Colonnade coursework. Although systems thinking situates institutions in theory, there is a need for incorporating a more human-centered approach that emphasizes understanding and addressing the needs and experiences of users at a more granular level.

Design Thinking

Design thinking is an innovative, human-centered approach that has been increasingly integrated into higher education to address complex challenges and foster creativity. It also involves the processes of empathy, ideation, prototyping, and testing to create innovative solutions that are desirable, feasible, and viable. Unlike the systems thinking approach, this methodology emphasizes pedagogies that allow students and educators to collaboratively develop solutions that are both practical and innovative (McLaughlin, et al., 2022) (Figure 3). By focusing on the needs and experiences of end-users, design thinking encourages a deeper understanding of problems and promotes the generation of diverse ideas. This iterative process not only enhances problem-solving skills but also prepares students to tackle real-world issues with a creative and adaptive mindset (Gilbert et al., 2017). These initiatives aim to equip students with the skills necessary to navigate an increasingly complex world, fostering innovation and collaboration, skills that they begin to develop within The Colonnade Program. By integrating design thinking into the curriculum, higher education institutions can create more engaging and effective learning experiences, ultimately preparing students to become proactive and resourceful leaders in their respective fields (Catlett-Miller, 2023).

Systems thinking, in contrast, emphasizes understanding the interconnections and dynamics within an entire system. It involves examining how various components of a system interact and influence one another to identify patterns and leverage points for change. As shown in Figure 2, systems thinking focuses on seeing the big picture and comprehending the underlying structures that drive behavior within a system, whereas design thinking is user-centered and outcome-focused. This approach is particularly valuable for addressing complex problems that require considering the interactions between multiple factors to achieve sustainable solutions.

Figure 3
Design vs. Systems Thinking

Source: Design Thinking & Systems Design - What's the Difference? https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/design-thinking-systems-whats-difference-si-london-hub/

Combining systems thinking and design thinking frameworks fosters a comprehensive approach to problem-solving. This integration enables students to grasp the intricate relationships within a system while also considering human needs and perspectives. As a result, they can develop innovative solutions that address entire problems rather than isolated parts. By examining the system as a whole and understanding the interactions between its elements, students can identify root causes and create solutions that address the entire system, not just its symptoms—a skill often noted as lacking by employers. Design thinking's emphasis on empathy and user-centered solutions enhances creative ideation, leading to more innovative and transformative outcomes. This combined approach not only results in more sustainable solutions but also improves decision-making by incorporating both problem identification *and* solution identification (Figure 4).

Figure 4
Problem vs. Solution Identification
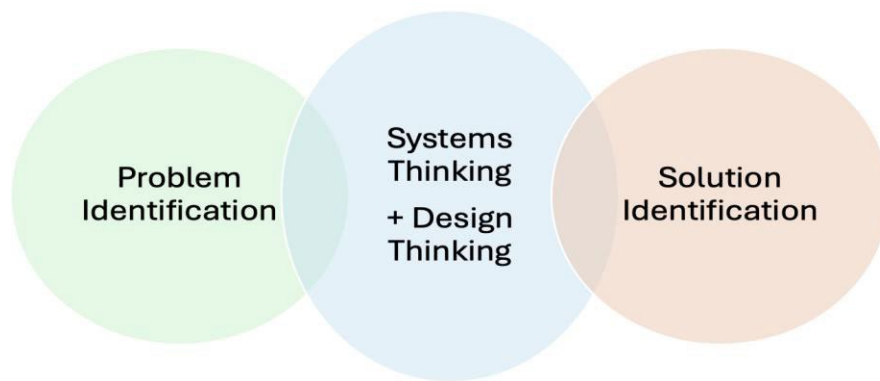
Futures Thinking

Futures thinking is a structured and intentional approach to exploring and preparing for potential future scenarios (Figure 5). It differs from design thinking because it involves considering various possibilities, identifying trends, and imagining different outcomes to better understand and shape the future. Futures thinking encourages looking at a range of potential futures rather than trying to predict a single outcome. This helps in understanding different scenarios and their implications. By analyzing current trends, signals of change, and emerging technologies to anticipate how they might evolve and impact the future, educators have a better idea of how to teach the future workforce. By considering multiple future scenarios, futures thinking helps build resilience and adaptability, allowing students as well as faculty to better navigate uncertainty and change. Futures thinking is a proactive approach that prepares students for the future by exploring various possibilities and making strategic decisions based on informed insights.

Figure 5
Future vs. Design Thinking
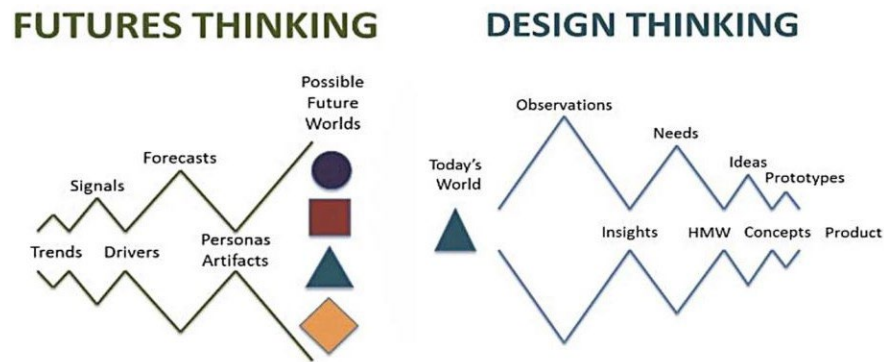
Source: Futures Thinking and Design Thinking Simply Explained. https://medium.com/design-bootcamp/future-thinking-and-design-thinking-simply-explained-d65716d67651

Note: HMW = "How might we," a design thinking method that uses question-framing techniques to rephrase a problem statement into an open-ended question that encourages creative brainstorming and exploration of potential solutions during the "Ideate" stage of the design thinking process

The integration of augmented reality, mixed reality, and machine learning into classrooms has revolutionized scholarly discussions worldwide. The future workforce will inevitably need to adapt to these advancements and be prepared for the changing job landscape. As higher education professionals design future curricula, they must recognize their role in equipping students with the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to succeed in this evolving workforce. According to McKenzie, over 375 million jobs are expected to be displaced and replaced with new ones by 2030 (as cited in Manyika et al., 2017).

By 2030, the job landscape is expected to undergo significant changes due to technological advancements and evolving societal needs. Increased automation and AI integration will likely reduce the demand for roles such as office staff and production workers, while boosting the need for high-skill workers, especially in healthcare and STEM fields. New professions will continue to emerge to meet the evolving needs of the workforce, focusing on optimizing remote work and integrating extended reality technologies. As certain jobs are displaced, there will be a growing need to support upskilling and reskilling efforts to ensure workers remain competitive in the new job market.

Since changes occur in the workforce rapidly, many students leave the universities with degrees that are obsolete in just a few years (Ingersoll, et al., 2021). The ability of students to understand the cone of possibilities for future employment allows them to make agile changes and pivot skills for new opportunities. By actively incorporating future thinking into college curriculum design, institutions can better prepare graduates with the necessary skills and adaptability to thrive in the evolving workforce.

With that in mind, faculty must design a curriculum that places the future workforce front and center. For example, WKU is exploring the incorporation of emerging technologies, developing

critical thinking and adaptability skills, integrating real-world applications through projects and internships, fostering interdisciplinary learning, and actively monitoring industry trends to align curriculum with future job demands, all while prioritizing skills like creativity, collaboration, and lifelong learning as core components. A future-focused college curriculum would actively scan for patterns and trends in advancements in industries and incorporate topics such as artificial intelligence, data analytics, automation, and virtual reality.

Along those lines, prioritizing skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, collaboration, adaptability, resilience, and emotional intelligence in the classroom is transferable for navigating a changing workforce, and students need to know that this starts within their general education curriculum and that it is not limited to their program classes. This approach encourages students to connect knowledge across different disciplines by offering cross-functional projects that promote innovative thinking. This can also be taught outside the classroom. Designing community-engaged projects that mirror real-world challenges allows students to apply their knowledge to solve complex problems and develop practical skills. Embedding a culture of futures thinking, creative problem-solving, and user-centered approaches encourages students to develop self-directed learning skills, access ongoing professional development opportunities, and stay updated with industry developments, ensuring students can adapt their skills in an ever-changing environment.

The "cone of future possibilities" (Figure 6) in workforce development is a visual representation, depicted as a cone shape, illustrating the range of potential future scenarios for employment.

Figure 6
Cone of Futures Thinking and the Workforce
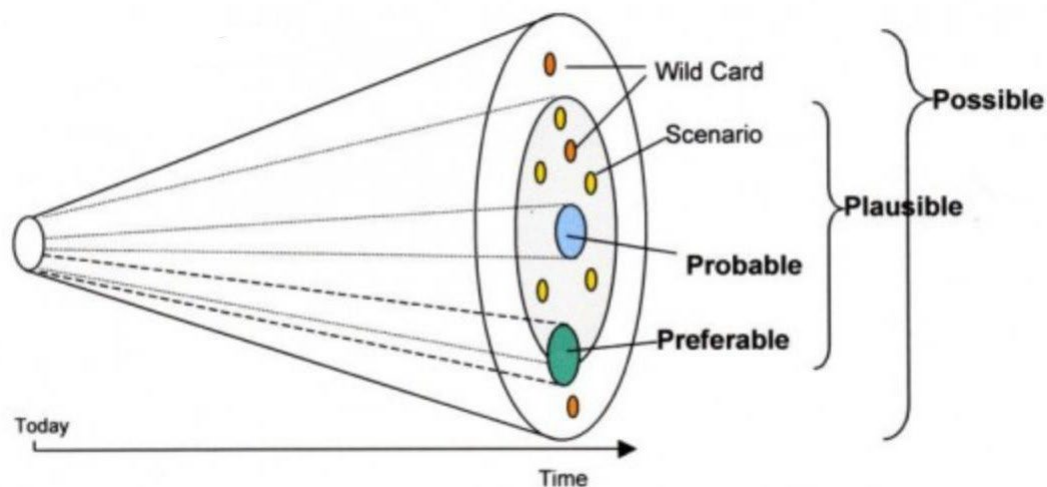
Source: Theory of Change: https://sjef.nu/theory-of-change-and-the-futures-cone/

There is a wide spectrum of possible outcomes, from highly probable to highly improbable, as the future unfolds, highlighting that the future is not linear and there are numerous potential paths ahead depending on various influences and decisions made today. The narrow end of the cone represents the present, with the wider end signifying the increasingly diverse range of potential

futures further into time. Within the cone, different future scenarios can be categorized as "probable," "plausible," and "possible," with the most likely outcomes closer to the center and less likely ones towards the edges (van Galen, 2018). Technological advancements, economic trends, demographic shifts, regulatory changes, and societal factors can all influence the shape and breadth of the cone, impacting the range of potential workforce scenarios. By exploring the wider range of possibilities, students can proactively identify potential disruptions or emerging trends that could significantly impact their workforce needs. Understanding the "cone of possibilities" can help faculty and students make more informed strategic decisions about acquiring Transferable Skills for a variety of future scenarios

The Role of Reflection

Because students do not always recognize their learning in the moment, reflection is key to closing the loop and allowing for consideration of what to do next with their new knowledge and skills (Ash & Clayton, 2009). The critical role of reflection in fostering deeper learning among university students is present in the literature. Reflection, often conceptualized as the active process of contemplating experiences to gain new understanding and meaning, moves beyond mere recall to engage students in critical self-assessment and the integration of new knowledge with existing frameworks (Dewey, 1933; Schön, 1983). Numerous studies highlight that without intentional reflection, learning can remain superficial, limited to rote memorization rather than the development of transferable skills and conceptual understanding (Moon, 2005). Reflection allows students to actively engage with their learning journey, including identifying gaps in their knowledge, refining their problem-solving strategies, and internalizing complex concepts, which can lead to long-term retention of the reflected-upon information as well as improved academic performance.

The benefits of incorporating reflective practices extend across diverse academic disciplines and pedagogical approaches. In health professions education, for example, reflection is consistently identified as a cornerstone for developing clinical reasoning, empathy, and professional identity (Mann et al., 2009). Medical students who engage in structured reflection on patient encounters report improved diagnostic accuracy and communication skills, demonstrating how reflection bridges theoretical knowledge and practical application. These practices move beyond simply consuming course content to cultivating higher-order thinking skills essential for future professional success. Well-designed and intentionally assigned reflective activities assist students in connecting theory to practice, making informed decisions, and adapting to new challenges.

Furthermore, reflection serves as a vital mechanism for promoting metacognition and self-regulated learning, empowering students to take greater ownership of their educational path. Metacognition, or "thinking about thinking," involves students becoming aware of their own cognitive processes, monitoring their comprehension, and evaluating the effectiveness of their learning strategies (Flavell, 1979). When students are prompted to reflect on their learning processes – how they approached a task, what challenges they encountered, and how they overcame them – they develop a deeper understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses as

learners (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011). This self-awareness enables them to adjust their study habits, seek help if needed, and set realistic goals. It is our hope that by educating our faculty about the KGP's Transferable Skills alongside Cosby's (2014) Professional Competency Model and coursework reflection activity that as our students progress through Colonnade and their programs beyond that, they will be more cognizant of the skills they are developing and which they need to improve upon.

Summary and Conclusions

WKU's Colonnade Program, particularly the Connections category, was designed to incorporate systems thinking and both local and global design thinking. Many courses in the Explorations category highlight the connections between interrelationships and dynamics within systems, illustrating how they contribute to human growth, societal changes, and pattern identification. Beyond systems thinking, various courses adopt a human-centered approach to problem-solving and innovation, encouraging students to define the root causes of problems and develop viable solutions. By integrating futures thinking into faculty pedagogy and curriculum through Toppers R.I.S.E., faculty and students will be better equipped to explore and prepare for the ever-changing future workforce. The frameworks of systems, design, and futures thinking promote a holistic view of the world, foster innovation and adaptability, identify leverage points for change, create user-centered solutions, and prepare students for multiple outcomes. Toppers R.I.S.E. aims to assist students in improving their ability to communicate these experiences and the skills gained through their time at WKU, starting with their Colonnade coursework and beyond that, during the job application and interview processes.

Broad-based Support

The collective commitment of WKU's faculty, staff, and students contributes to a thriving university community. By collaborating on issues related to student success, we prepare graduates who are not only workforce-ready but also equipped to make meaningful contributions to society. Student success is also a shared responsibility that extends beyond the classroom. At WKU, faculty and staff, administration, alumni, and community members play critical roles in supporting students' holistic development, preparing them for the workforce, and contributing to society. In turn, the success of our QEP involves a joint effort to enhance teaching, learning, and support in units across campus to collaborate with students to co-create initiatives, programs, and resources that address their needs. Through these partnerships, our campus community will foster a sense of ownership and empower students to actively shape their educational experiences. In designing Toppers R.I.S.E., it was important for our teams to be inclusive of various organizational units on campus, including academic affairs, enrollment management, student affairs, advising, career services, housing and residence life, and faculty who teach in The Colonnade Program. Coordinated efforts ensure that students receive comprehensive guidance, both academically and personally. In summary, the collective commitment of WKU stakeholders and constituents contributes to a thriving university community.

Participation in topic selection

To gain widespread support and buy-in, all faculty and staff were invited to attend one of four meetings, including online, to generate overarching ideas for the next QEP. In August of 2022, the Provost sent a campus-wide email inviting faculty and staff to attend one of several focus group discussions to determine WKU's next Quality Enhancement Program (Appendix 2). The focus groups were held in the Provost's suite during the months of September and October. After ideas were developed, the groups convened once again to choose the top ideas. Seven were chosen as contenders:

1. The Kentucky Graduate Profile
2. Expanded University Experience
3. Student Wellness
4. Literacy
5. Career Development
6. Improved Advising
7. Experiential & Applied Learning

In November 2022, a survey (Appendix 3) was distributed to all faculty and staff, asking them to rank various topics. The majority prioritized the Kentucky Graduate Profile's (KGP) Transferable Skills, followed by Experiential & Applied Learning (Appendix 4). Since these Transferable Skills encompass literacy, applied learning, career development, and advising improvement, WKU can address five of the seven proposed areas under one initiative. Once the focus was determined, Deans and staff leadership appointed representatives to assist in designing the QEP. These sub-committees were tasked with using the 2023-2024 year to determine how their specific areas fit into the proposed QEP.

After several exploratory meetings, the committee was divided into four sub-committees to focus on: a) faculty development, b) academic advising, c) career services, and d) The Colonnade Program. Each committee was provided with a template to complete and submit by the end of the 2024 semester (Appendix 5).

Introducing Toppers R.I.S.E. to Campus
In Spring 2025, the QEP Director began to introduce Toppers R.I.S.E to the campus. She hosted 16 "Coffee Talk" 30-minute webinars, to which 90 faculty and staff logged in. She also offered to meet with leadership for each of WKU's colleges and WKU Libraries. Additionally, the QEP Director met with the Associate Director of Advising, the Associate Director of Career Development, the Associate Director of Student Activities, and the Assistant Director of First Year Programs for Housing and Residence Life to discuss how their activities and contacts with students could be used to educate students about the KGP's Transferable Skills and how they extend beyond the classroom and into their on-campus programming, activities, and student employment opportunities.

The QEP Director also solicited names for a QEP Student Focus Group. These students met for two hours, during which they brainstormed ideas of how to market Toppers R.I.S.E. to peers and gave feedback on the QEP draft. They also shared a willingness to be part of a QEP Ambassador program to continue their involvement. They liked the ideas of the QEP, with several wishing someone had helped them see the importance of their Colonnade coursework before taking those classes.

Each meeting was an open conversation about the purpose and intent of Toppers R.I.S.E. and how their programs and units aligned with its proposed outcomes. The reception was positive in every meeting and discussion.

Conclusion: It Takes a Team

In addition to the essential work of teaching employability skills in the classroom and providing KGP Transferable Skills-focused academic advising, Toppers R.I.S.E. is designed to promote a holistic approach to student success and ensure the long-term impact of the initiative. Through high-impact practices such as first-year experiences, study abroad programs, experiential learning, and community-based research, students gain real-world perspectives and develop intercultural competence by integrating academic learning with community engagement.

These experiences serve as a cornerstone of Toppers R.I.S.E., helping students build critical, valuable, and transferable skills such as communication, teamwork, civic responsibility, and social awareness. However, acquiring these skills is only part of the equation. Equally important is the ability to clearly articulate and demonstrate these competencies to potential employers, graduate programs, and professional networks. Toppers R.I.S.E. supports this by embedding opportunities for reflection, self-assessment, and skill translation throughout the student experience.

Personalized support through degree pathways, career planning, and advising further reinforces this approach. For example, the Career Development Center offers individualized counseling to help students explore career options, identify strengths, and set professional goals. Career coaches also facilitate employer connections through job fairs, networking events, and skill-building workshops, where students learn how to present their experiences and qualifications effectively. Additionally, the Career Development Center prioritizes access to internships, especially for students who may face barriers to such opportunities, ensuring equitable access to career-building experiences. Students who fully engage with Toppers R.I.S.E. will be encouraged during and after their Colonnade completion to seek out these services to help continue to see the alignment between Colonnade, courses in their chosen programs, and the careers they are working toward.

This integrated collaboration between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs exemplifies how WKU is not only helping students to see the value in their foundational courses that comprise The Colonnade program but also in preparing students to succeed in the workforce and to confidently communicate the value of all of their education and experiences. In doing so, Toppers R.I.S.E. advances both student development and institutional goals for career readiness.

<div align="center">**Focus**</div>

Introduction

The primary focus of Toppers R.I.S.E. is to enhance students' ability to effectively communicate to potential employers how their academic experiences have equipped them with the Toppers R.I.S.E. 10 Transferable Skills, translating these into valuable workplace competencies. According to our survey of area employers (Appendix 1), Transferable Skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, and communication are highly valued across various industries. By helping students to understand that they begin working with these skills in their Colonnade courses and emphasizing the reflection up on and articulation of these skills, WKU's QEP aims to ensure that students can clearly and confidently convey their competencies on resumes, job applications, and during interviews. By integrating these components, Toppers R.I.S.E. not only develops students' Transferable Skills but also ensures they can effectively communicate these skills to potential employers, thereby enhancing their employability and career success.

First, Toppers R.I.S.E. integrates the identification and communication of Transferable Skills into the curriculum. This integration begins with Colonnade courses and ideally extends to all program courses. Alongside embedding these skills into the curriculum, faculty will encourage students to engage in activities and assignments, some of which might be reflective, that help them recognize and articulate the skills they are developing through their coursework, internships, and extracurricular activities.

This approach allows students to better understand how their Colonnade coursework connects with their programs of study, introducing, developing, and reinforcing the Kentucky Graduate Profile's (KGP) skills in the former and working toward mastery in the latter. Through this process, students will be better equipped to identify and communicate their competencies, making them more competitive in the job market. Toppers R.I.S.E. will promote a holistic educational experience by ensuring that students not only acquire these essential skills but also understand how to effectively convey them to potential employers, including selecting evidence of their achievements to include in an online portfolio. Some comprehensive approaches might include:

1. **Skill Mapping**: Helping students map their academic and extracurricular experiences to specific Transferable Skills.
2. **Reflective Assignments**: Encouraging students to reflect on their learning experiences and articulate the skills they have gained.
3. **Portfolio Development**: Assisting students in creating portfolios that showcase their skills and achievements.
4. **Workshops and Seminars**: Offering sessions on the Transferable Skills, resume writing, interview preparation, and professional communication to enhance students' ability to present their skills effectively.
5. **Faculty Training**: Providing faculty with the tools and resources needed to integrate skill identification and communication training into their courses.

By implementing these strategies, Toppers R.I.S.E. aims to ensure that students can confidently and clearly communicate their Transferable Skills, thereby enhancing their employability and career readiness.

Second, Toppers R.I.S.E. enhances the advising system, empowering students to take more active roles in their course scheduling. By having faculty identify which Colonnade courses address each transferable skill, advisors and students can easily identify skills that have not yet been developed through the students' Colonnade coursework. This allows for more informed course selection, ensuring that students not only fulfill their general education requirements across each Colonnade tier but also practice and develop all 10 Transferable Skills. This improved advising system ensures that students not only meet their academic requirements but also more intentionally develop a well-rounded skill set that enhances their employability and readiness for the professional world.

Third, while beyond the assessment scope, Toppers R.I.S.E. will encourage students to engage with the Career Development Center throughout their college journey, rather than just at the end. Workshops and seminars will provide practical guidance on resume writing, cover letter preparation, and interview techniques, with an emphasis on highlighting their experiences with each of the skills that today's workplaces demand.

Fourth, as students progress through their college careers, these collaborations with Advising and Career Services along with completing their Colonnade courses, reflecting on their skill acquisition, and creating an online portfolio, can be used to fulfill the requirements for a badge, showing achievement of Topper R.I.S.E. Transferable Skills and the student's ability to articulate their personal experiences with each.

Outcomes-based Logic Model

WKU developed a logic model using the following outcomes:

By the end of the Colonnade Program, at least 80% of students assessed will:
- demonstrate competency in targeted KGP skills (critical thinking, written/oral communication) by achieving milestone level 3 or higher on artifacts assessed using the corresponding AAC&U LEAP VALUE rubrics.
- (1) report Early Application (level 3) or higher in targeted KGP skills (critical thinking, written/oral communication) on the NACE Career Readiness Student Competency Assessment, and (2) earn a score of 3 or higher on their written reflection of skill development as assessed using the KGP Reflection Scoring Rubric.

Using backwards design, we started with short-, medium-, and long-terms then envisioned the outputs (activities and participation) we desired. From there, we identified the inputs (investments) necessary to achieve the outcome (Figure 7).

Figure 7

QEP Logic Model

QEP Logic Model

Inputs *What we invest*	Outputs		Outcomes		
	Activities *What we do*	Participation *Who is involved*	Short-Term [*Learning*]	Medium-Term [*Action*]	Long-Term [*Conditions*]

Personnel:
- Faculty
- Staff
- Colonnade committee
- ACDC staff
- QEP Scholars

Time:
- Training
- Advising students

Finances:
- Training stipends
- Marketing
- Materials

Research base:
- KGP skills
- Employer needs
- TILT method

Partnerships:
- Internal stakeholders *(AA, Colonnade Committee, CITL)*
- Employers and external stakeholders

Activities:

Identify, recruit, and train key WKU faculty teaching Colonnade courses in KGP skills.

Identify, recruit, and train key WKU faculty teaching Colonnade courses in TILT method.

- Academic Affairs
- Colonnade Committee
- CITL
- QEP leaders
- QEP Scholars

Train ACDC advisors in KGP skills and how they are embedded in Colonnade courses.

Train ACDC advisors in assisting students to schedule comprehensive KGP skill exposure.

- ACDC advisors.
- ACDC administrators
- QEP leaders
- QEP Scholars

Short-Term:

Colonnade faculty identify the curricular alignment between course content and KGP skills.

Colonnade faculty consistently embed and explain KGP skill development in course syllabi and TILT-aligned assignments

Students reflect on KGP skills development in Colonnade courses

ACDC advisors communicate to students the KGP skills developed in Colonnade courses and assist in scheduling comprehensive KGP skill exposure

Medium-Term:

SLO #1: Students demonstrate observable growth in KGP skills

SLO #2: Students demonstrate metacognitive awareness of KGP skills development

Long-Term:

Graduates are more confident and prepared to communicate KGP skills developed

Colonnade program recognized for developing essential KGP skills

Employers observe improved readiness in KGP skills among WKU graduates

Assumptions
- Colonnade faculty are willing to engage in training, alignment, and communicating to students.
- Colonnade courses develop the KGP skills and faculty can map the connections.
- These KGP skills are transferable from coursework to future employment.

External Factors
- Expectations from employers align to the KGP skills and are stable over time.
- Rapidly evolving technology capabilities may appreciably influence the skills students need for employability.

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Faculty Development

Although there might not be a direct connection between faculty development and graduate employability, faculty development is critical to the success of the Toppers R.I.S.E. Using the Professionalism Competency Model (PCM) (see Figure. 8), Cosby (2014) described how faculty development worked in conjunction with curriculum and assessment to develop students' professional competencies and make them work-ready graduates. While faculty are likely teaching these skills already in their courses, McKinney et al. (2021) posited that most of those who are doing so probably do not directly point this out to students as to how their classroom learning maps to the skills employers are seeking.

Figure 8

Professionalism Competency Model

Source: Assessment Associates International https://aai-assessment.com/

Throughout the implementation of Toppers R.I.S.E., WKU will encourage and support faculty and staff in their revision and re-visioning of materials to ensure students are gaining experience with the Transferable Skills. The WKU Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning (CITL) will be integral to coordinating and implementing programming to educate our faculty about the KGP, systems thinking, design thinking, futures thinking, and the PCM, and then to help them develop curriculum around the Skills. This will include a discussion of how faculty can help students to see how their coursework translates into Transferable Skills, which later can be represented on their job application materials that they craft with the assistance of the Career Development Center. The PCM will be presented as the preferred way to encourage metacognitive reflection on coursework to help students to realize their achievements and discover gaps in skills.

Faculty development related to Toppers R.I.S.E. will include webinars, workshops, panel discussions, Communities of Practice, and more. Using the Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT) Higher Education framework, faculty will be provided extra resources to revise curriculum in a manner that allows students to understand why they are doing what they are doing and what specific skills they can demonstrate because of taking the course (Winkelmes, 2013). TILT is a teaching strategy that focuses on making the learning process clear and understandable for students and involves clearly explaining the purpose, tasks, and criteria for assignments and activities. This approach helps students understand not just what they need to do, but why they are doing it and how they can use those skills in the workplace.

Research has shown students perform better when they understand the purpose and criteria of their assignments, allowing them to focus on what is important for success on the assignment (Graff, 2021; Winkelmes, 2023; Bahena, et al., 2024; Ojha, et al., 2024). Using TILT can also make a significant difference in student engagement and success, creating a more inclusive and effective learning environment. CITL has been offering programming on the TILT model for over two years and will continue to do so in support of the QEP. Because of the varied ways in which student affairs personnel and other staff educate and interact with our students, such knowledge would be valuable to them for the planning of their programming, as well. In addition, TILT creates a sense of belonging in the classroom, especially for those from underrepresented groups, and can help reduce achievement gaps by providing all students with the same clear information and support (Winkelmes, 2023).

In addition to TILT, faculty will have the opportunity to participate in development opportunities focused on the future of work. These events will be designed to enhance participants' ability to think innovatively and strategically, generate new ideas, and approach problems from different perspectives. Faculty will learn principles for developing and implementing effective strategies, enabling them to communicate the transferability of classroom skills to the ever-changing global market characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA) (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014). This involves understanding the "big picture" concerning curriculum, embracing forward-thinking/future-thinking pedagogy, and anticipating future changes and challenges. These seminars, workshops, and presentations will be valuable for faculty and staff at all levels, helping them to develop the skills needed to navigate complex environments and drive campus innovation.

Staff Development: Advising & Degree Pathways

WKU has a centralized advising team for first- and second-year students, as well as consultation provided by faculty as students move into their majors. Creating seamless pathways among course schedules, course and program management, and career pathways and planning allows advisors, faculty, and students to play an active role in developing the skills necessary for success after graduation. To encourage students to work toward mastery of communicating the Transferable Skills, we will create a badging program that students can include on resumes and professional media, as well as discuss in interviews. To complete the requirements for the badging, advisors will help students navigate their academic journey, providing guidance, support, and encouragement.

Plan for Implementation

The overall goal of Toppers R.I.S.E. is to ensure that WKU students know, as they go through their coursework—both within Colonnade and within their majors—what Transferable Skills they are developing and that they can then articulate their new skillset alongside the coursework that they submit as artifacts of that learning. This builds on the critical thinking and communication skills of the last two QEPs to produce a more well-rounded graduate of our institution. As The Colonnade Program celebrates its 10th anniversary, we also see how it aligns with the KGP's Transferable Skills and can be improved to best suit today's students to be as prepared as possible in the job market.

Integral to the success of Toppers R.I.S.E. is faculty understanding of the KGP's 10 Essential Skills, which will be presented to students in the more marketable language of Transferable Skills as part of this QEP, and how they are represented in coursework, particularly The Colonnade Program. During Year 1, the QEP Director, in collaboration with WKU's Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning (CITL), will facilitate a Community of Practice for Colonnade faculty focused on developing resources to help others be successful in their QEP integration while developing their skills. At the conclusion, we will invite exemplary members of this cohort to be QEP Scholars who will commit to one year of service, with the possibility to renew for each of the remaining four years for the QEP cycle. As part of their service, they will encourage faculty within their colleges to adopt the ideas and practices of the QEP. While the focus of our QEP is on seeing the identification of the KGP skills in Colonnade courses, the hope is that this truly becomes campus culture and the skills are identified throughout every course and program, as well.

As part of that PLC, together with (CITL), we will offer a series of professional development activities for participants to learn more about the Transferable Skills the TILT Framework and Cosby's (2014) Professionalism Competency Model so that they might more effectively teach their peers about the skills and possible ways to implement and assess them in their courses and how to help students to understand which skills they are developing within each course they complete. The QEP Director will work with CITL to offer workshops and Communities of Practice to Colonnade faculty each year.

Since CITL has been offering workshops and consultations about the TILT Framework for over two years, this is not a new idea on our campus, but the number of faculty who use it is still small. This method of constructing assignment prompts is integral to Toppers R.I.S.E. and we will continue to offer this training and support throughout the QEP. This will be done by the staff at CITL, the QEP Director, by faculty who have successfully integrated the use of this model into their course design, and perhaps by the QEP Scholars. We will also provide development over Dana Cosby's (2014) Professionalism Competency Model and how faculty can teach students how to identify Transferable Skills in all their classes. Because Dr. Cosby (now Henson) is faculty in the Gordon Ford College of Business, she will be able to assist in these development opportunities and will give faculty a tried-and-true method for how to emphasize the Transferable Skills being taught within their curriculum, no matter what the discipline.

For participation in all these offerings, we will offer documentation of assisting with the

implementation of Toppers R.I.S.E. that faculty can include in their yearly portfolios for continuance, promotion and tenure, and evaluation.

The QEP Director, alongside the Associate Director of Academic Advising will offer sessions to help both ACDC advisors and faculty advisors to learn about the KGP Transferable skills, the QEP, and how to use the Degree Audit to guide a discussion with students about selecting classes that will allow them to begin their development of all ten skills, if possible.

In Fall 2025, we will also train advisors and program coordinators, as well as other academic personnel, on how to talk about the Toppers R.I.S.E. Transferable Skills when advising students for registration and interacting with prospective and incoming students. The QEP Director will work with the Colonnade Director and Registrar in gathering the skills of focus for each Colonnade course from program coordinators, as well as what level on a scale of Introduce, Develop, Reinforce, Master (IDRM), though no Colonnade courses are anticipated to rise to the Mastery level. The skills of focus will be integrated into the Degree Works degree audit system so that when advisors and students run a degree audit, they can see which skills have been worked on in which courses, as well as which skills still need to be covered in future coursework.

To ensure that students are properly introduced to Toppers R.I.S.E., the QEP team will meet with Housing and Residence Life staff about how to best incorporate an orientation to M.A.S.T.E.R. (Making Academic and Social Transitions Educationally Rewarding) Plan, WKU's transition program for all new undergraduate students. This one-week residential program features "breakout" style sessions where the QEP Director will help students to reframe Colonnade from being "classes to get out of the way" to "classes where important foundations for success are built" and how the Transferable Skills can help them throughout Colonnade and into their majors. A similar session will be done for the New Member Symposium for Greek Life. There has also been discussion of sponsoring a social event in the evening for MASTER Plan participants to raise campus awareness of the QEP.

Our last task in preparation for the start of Toppers R.I.S.E. will be to identify criteria for and mechanisms needed to be in place to award badges related to students participating in the QEP via taking Colonnade courses, attending a MASTER Plan or Greek Life info session, and participating in an Advising Workshop as well on reflecting to share their basic knowledge of the Transferable Skills.

QEP Timeline

Year 1 (Fall 2025 – Spring 2026)

In our first year, we will introduce Toppers R.I.S.E. to the campus community. For incoming first-year students, this will happen at M.A.S.T.E.R. Plan, an extended orientation in which >90% of first-year students participate, and the New Member Symposium for students in Greek Life. For faculty and staff, the introduction will happen at both Convocation and New Faculty Orientation. This will include sharing information about the QEP and how to get involved in it if they teach Foundations courses or are an advisor or career counselor.

During Year 1, we will work with Institutional Research to identify and ask program coordinators to communicate with their faculty who teach Colonnade courses to indicate via a Google form which of the Transferable Skills are practiced in their courses, along with mapping their courses to the IDRM levels and including this information in their course syllabi so that students will know what is expected of them for each skill when they register for classes. This information will be added into the Degree Works auditing system, which will require coordination with the Registrar, so that both advisors and students can see it each time they run a degree audit. We will also provide a spreadsheet of courses for each skill to advisors to assist students in taking courses that will expose them to the KGP skills through the Colonnade program, like the course listing that is provided now on the WKU Colonnade website.

Additionally, it is anticipated that as the timeline of Toppers R.I.S.E. progresses, since students will be accustomed to seeing the Transferable Skills on their Colonnade course syllabi and discussed in those classes, this program will naturally expand beyond Colonnade and into the programs, especially in capstone courses. After the Spring 2025 introductory webinars, some programs had already planned to do this, and it is expected that more will follow.

The campus introduction campaign for students beyond M.A.S.T.E.R. Plan may consist of information at undergraduate recruitment events, at events such as the Majors and Minors Fair, and tabling in the Centennial Plaza and Downing Student Union with associated swag to have a chance to talk to current students about the Transferable Skills and Toppers R.I.S.E. and how the QEP will help them going forward. We hope to use our student advisory board to assist in this, as college students have been found to better receive some information when delivered by their peers (Hill et al., 2021).

Toppers R.I.S.E. will also have a dashboard in the Suitable App, which students will be introduced to at M.A.S.T.E.R. Plan. Students will have a chance to earn an "Early Riser" badge by attending an advising workshop, meeting with their advisor, meeting with a career counselor, and submitting a reflection by the end of their first semester. We will also use Suitable for students to track which classes helped them to learn about which skills and to begin creating a portfolio of artifacts of their choosing that show how they demonstrated each skill. These artifacts could be papers, slide decks, links to oral presentations, or any other work the student chooses to preserve. At the end of each semester, they will have the opportunity to include a reflection that discusses the skills they practiced and how, so that they will have this information for future reference when later applying for internships and jobs. Other badges are under development to encourage students to build their abilities with each Transferable Skill and to encourage reflection and portfolio building. In the

Suitable app, students earn points toward badges for their participation in activities in the app and activities they attend, which generates a leaderboard. We expect this to be a motivating factor for participation, in addition to the benefits that documenting their skills as they go along will have on preparing them to discuss their skills in their job application materials and at interviews in the future.

For faculty and staff development, we will schedule workshops and webinars hosted by CITL on the TILT model. This will enable us to recruit for the QEP Scholars and educate faculty and staff on how to use the TILT model to improve their curricula and programming. We will focus on inviting those who interact with first-year students, those who teach Colonnade courses, and those who advise students, both for Colonnade and their programs, but the programming will be open to all members of the university community. This will be followed up with another semester-long Community of Practice through CITL, limited to Colonnade course faculty, to help faculty protect time to work on converting their course materials to use the TILT model and Cosby's (2014) Professional Competencies Model and activities for reflection while also developing resources that they believe faculty in their home colleges will find useful.

Additionally, for faculty and staff development, we will hold Toppers R.I.S.E. advising workshops to help them to understand our vision for how they can help students better understand the Transferable Skills and QEP.

To reinforce the value of the Transferable Skills, we will also hold student workshops through ACDC to help them learn more about the Transferable Skills and how they can best present themselves to employers via their résumés and interviews. This will include best practices for writing cover letters that will be submitted to AI systems now used by many employers, résumé tips, and ideas for how to discuss the skillset they have developed through Colonnade and their majors in an interview. We will also use the Suitable app to help students track their progress with the 10 Transferable Skills and to begin building a portfolio of work that demonstrates them.

We will initiate our Assessment Plan and adjust programming and evaluation as necessary.

Years 2-4 (Fall 2026- Spring 2029)

Faculty and staff professional development will continue in Years 2-4, including working with Institutional Research to identify Colonnade faculty who have not yet been working with the QEP, Colonnade, or are new to the institution. We hope to start Fall 2026 with an extended workshop with a TILT expert to further encourage the use of this model throughout campus, not only in Colonnade but also with the academic programs. Each year will include another semester-long Community of Practice through CITL to help faculty protect time to work on converting their course materials to use the TILT model and Cosby's (2014) Professional Competencies Model.

Our team will:
- Continue to work with Colonnade faculty for new courses to input Transferable Skills and mapping levels into Degree Works.
- Continue to promote the Transferable Skills and Toppers R.I.S.E. to students at M.A.S.T.E.R. Plan, undergraduate recruitment events, the Majors and Minors fair, and hold tablings.

- Continue to train new advisors.
- Continue to hold extracurricular engagement opportunities for students through ACDC.
- Using Suitable, we will encourage students to upload artifacts that they can later include in a portfolio, document the skills they have worked on each semester, and reflect on those experiences.
- We will do yearly assessments and make adjustments to programming and evaluation as necessary.

Year 5 (Fall 2029 – Spring 2030) Final QEP Assessment

While faculty and staff professional development and student awareness activities will continue, we will work in Year 5 to pull together our data to assess the success of Toppers R.I.S.E.

<center>**Resources**</center>

Institutional Commitment

Sufficient financial resources have been identified and earmarked to support implementation consistent with the implementation timeline, including a QEP recurring budget line for QEP personnel, stipends, travel, supplies, and equipment, and one-time funds for the kickoff in Fall 2025. In addition to monetary resources, advisory boards and additional scholars will be appointed to provide guidance, oversight, and support throughout the QEP initiative process, ensuring that the project stays on track and meets its objectives

QEP Director

The QEP Director is charged with building campus-wide awareness and understanding of the Kentucky Graduate Profile's 10 Essential Skills, promoting professional development opportunities for faculty and staff, fostering student involvement and commitment, and maintaining regular communication with the campus community. The Director is a full-time, tenure-track faculty member with a two-course release each semester and will give 50% of their time/effort in the summer. The QEP Director possesses the following:

1. A deep understanding of the Colonnade General Education Program,
2. The willingness and ability to work with diverse groups of faculty and staff in advancing the goals and outcomes of the QEP, and
3. Strong organizational, operational, and communication skills.

Specific duties of the QEP Director include:
- Assisting individual faculty and departments in further embedding Kentucky Graduate Profile's 10 Essential Learning Outcomes, the Transferable Skills, into Colonnade courses.
- Coordinating and communicating QEP goals, objectives, and initiatives to students, utilizing advising, admission, and living-learning community staff.
- Working with the Colonnade Director and Committee on embedding (introducing, developing, and reinforcing) Kentucky Graduate Profile's 10 Essential Skills in WKU's General Education program, The Colonnade.
- Organizing and promoting Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning (CITL) opportunities for professional development related to the pedagogical best practices in grounding student learning outcomes in the Kentucky Graduate Profile's 10 Essential Skills.
- Forming and leading a QEP advisory group to provide informed feedback, help shape implementation, and evaluate the success of QEP initiatives.
- Working closely with the Assistant Provost for Institutional Effectiveness & Engagement to ensure the successful implementation and assessment of Toppers R.I.S.E.

The QEP Director will be the liaison between the QEP Team (which includes the QEP Advisory Board, the QEP Student Advisory Board, and the QEP Scholars) and the administration.

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QEP Advisory Board

The QEP Director will assemble a group of faculty and staff who represent each of the colleges and the Student Affairs units. This Board will be convened to solicit feedback and ideas and to assist with implementation and assessment throughout the QEP. The Board will also work with the QEP Director to share with deans, department chairs, and program coordinators the results of the yearly assessment so that adjustments might be made to assignments or instruction to improve students' learning.

QEP Student Advisory Board & Ambassadors

The QEP Director has assembled a representative group of undergraduate students to assist with gaining the student perspective on the QEP and promoting the QEP among students. These students represent each of the colleges, the Student Government Association, our campus ambassadors, the Spirit Masters, student leaders from Admissions and Housing, and leaders from Greek Life. All were recommended by advisors as reliable, involved students on our campus. While they were initially brought together for the purpose of a focus group before the completion of the QEP's drafting, they suggested that a set of QEP Ambassadors would be of interest to them to help other students better understand what the QEP was and how to leverage it. We will also explore training The Writing Center's tutors to specifically mentor students on the Transferable Skills of focus, Effective Communication, and Critical Thinking in the work brought to The Writing Center.

Key Responsibilities:
- **Implementation Leadership Among Peers:** Assist with the implementation of the QEP, ensuring alignment with the university's strategic goals, accreditation requirements, and outcomes of Toppers R.I.S.E.
- **Collaboration:** Work closely with the QEP Director and peers to promote engagement and participation in QEP activities among students. This might include participating in training sessions about the KGP and QEP, participating in QEP-related workshops or panels for students or faculty and staff, and meetings to support the QEP.
- **Communication:** Maintain clear and consistent communication with the QEP Director.
- **Advising on TILTed Assignment Prompts:** Provide feedback when asked on instructors' assignment prompts that have been revised to use the TILT model.

QEP Scholars

The QEP Scholars will be selected via two methods. First, the Community of Practice in Fall 2025 will culminate in the invitation of interested individuals who would like to work in support of the QEP. If all spots are not filled, the QEP Director will issue a call for nominations among the Colonnade faculty for those who are known for their implementation of any of the Kentucky Graduate Profile's 10 Essential Skills in their Colonnade courses to be QEP Scholars. These stipended faculty will share their ideas and implementation of the skill(s) they command and will be involved in faculty development events. The commitment will be one year with the possibility for renewal for the duration of this QEP.

The Scholars will play a pivotal role in leading the implementation and assessment of the QEP. This assignment involves collaborating with faculty, staff, and students to enhance and ensure that the student learning outcomes of Toppers R.I.S.E. are met continuously. The QEP Scholars will be responsible for developing and executing strategies to achieve the goals outlined in the QEP, as well as assisting with assessment and reporting as needed.

QEP Scholars' Key Responsibilities:
- **Implementation Leadership:** Assist with the implementation of the QEP, ensuring alignment with the university's strategic goals, accreditation requirements, and outcomes of Toppers R.I.S.E.
- **Assessment and Evaluation:** Will use tools developed and selected by the Director of the Burch Institute to measure the effectiveness of QEP initiatives. Analyze data and prepare reports to inform decision-making and continuous improvement.
- **Collaboration:** Work closely with faculty, staff, and students to promote engagement and participation in QEP activities. Help facilitate workshops, training sessions, and meetings to support QEP initiatives. This might also include working closely with faculty regarding adjustments to assignments should yearly assessment results or QEP Student Ambassadors' feedback indicate a need for revision.
- **Communication:** Maintain clear and consistent communication with all stakeholders regarding QEP progress, challenges, and successes. Prepare and present updates to university leadership and accreditation bodies when requested.
- **Research and Best Practices:** Stay informed about current trends related to transferable skills and employment post college graduation. Apply this knowledge to improve QEP strategies and outcomes.
- **Documentation:** Ensure thorough documentation of all QEP activities, assessments, and outcomes. Maintain accurate records for accreditation purposes.

Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning (CITL)

The Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning supports the mission of the university by administering and facilitating professional development opportunities for faculty, staff, and graduate students. CITL will partner with the QEP Director and QEP Scholars to raise awareness of the QEP and coordinate professional development events related to the QEP. CITL's role will also include instructional designers working closely with faculty regarding their implementation of TILT in their courses or adjustments to assignments, should yearly assessment results or QEP Student Ambassadors' feedback indicate a need for revision.

The Kelly M. Burch Institute for Transformative Practices in Higher Education

Burch Institute at WKU "supports innovative and transformative practices and research initiatives related to student success and that advance the mission of the university. The Institute is designed to encourage cross-divisional collaboration and welcomes innovative ideas from faculty, staff, and students" (About the institute, 2020). The Director of the Burch Institute will partner with the QEP Director for assessment and other QEP-related reporting as needed.

Other Expenses

There will be other expenses associated with the QEP, such as: promotional materials (e.g., t-shirts, water bottles, stickers); fees for speakers and workshops for faculty; travel to the yearly SACSCOC conference and other conferences as deemed appropriate; software and other materials needed for assessment.

QEP Budget Overview, Projected

Table 3
Projected FY 24 - FY 30 Budget Overview

Expenditure Category	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget
Salaries Contingent: Salary for QEP Director (AY - $24k plus 1.5 Months Summer Salary)	35,100.00	35,300.00	35,500.00	35,750.00	36,000.00	36,240.00
Stipends: Faculty development, up to 10 QEP scholars to work in tandem with CITL and one Colonnade Director; other faculty who provide assessment assistance.	18,000.00	26,000.00	26,000.00	26,000.00	26,000.00	26,000.00
Stipends: Faculty (10) @$500.00 who provide assessment assistance during the summer months		5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00
Fringe Benefits	12,744.00	15,912.00	15,960.00	16,020.00	16,080.00	16,137.60
Course Reductions (2 per semester for QEP Director and 1 per semester for Colonnade)	20,000.00	20,000.00	20,000.00	20,000.00	20,000.00	20,000.00
General Supplies & Administrative: FY 25 includes a fall kickoff in the afternoon after convocation; cover marketing & materials		2,245.00	6,600.00	15,545.00	6,600.00	9,545.00
Kickoff Speaker Fall 2025		14,000.00				
TILT Speaker/workshop, Spring 2026		8,100.00				
Travel: FY 24 SACSCOC Conference (x2); FY 25-28 SACSCOC + Other relative Conferences; FY 29 SACSCOC Conference (x2)	15,000.00	15,000.00	15,000.00	15,000.00	15,000.00	8,000.00
Total	**100,844.00**	**141,557.00**	**124,060.00**	**133,315.00**	**124,680.00**	**120,922.60**
Total QEP Expenditures:						**$745,378.60**

Student Learning Outcome 1 (SLO 1):
By the end of The Colonnade Program, at least 80% of students assessed will demonstrate competency in targeted KGP skills (critical thinking, written/oral communication) by achieving milestone level 3 or higher on artifacts assessed using the corresponding AAC&U LEAP VALUE rubrics.

Faculty Role in Alignment and Artifact Submission

All Colonnade courses, regardless of tier (Foundations, Explorations, Connections), will be required to identify which of the ten Kentucky Graduate Profile (KGP) skills they address (alignment). Faculty will identify which of the KGP skills are assessed via the Key Assessment Artifact submission(s). For each selected skill, faculty must also indicate the level of emphasis within the course: Introduced, Developed, or Reinforced. ("Mastered" is reserved for assessment within students' major programs).

Courses producing assessable artifacts aligned to one or more of the targeted KGP skills (critical thinking, written communication, or oral communication) will upload student artifacts to a centralized assessment database each academic term.

Sampling Strategy
To ensure a representative evaluation of student skill development, we will implement a stratified random sampling approach aligned to the structure of The Colonnade Program and the developmental progression of skill development. The sampling matrix below (Table 3) is designed to address the three targeted KGP skill areas at each of the three developmental levels (Introduced, Developed, and Reinforced) for a total of nine sampling strata. We will use random sampling within each stratum.

Table 4
Sampling Strategy

	Introduced	Developed	Reinforced
Critical Thinking	30	30	30
Written Communication	30	30	30
Oral Communication	30	30	30
Total	**90**	**90**	**90**

A total of 270 unique artifacts will be collected and scored annually, distributed evenly across these nine strata. Each artifact will be double-scored by trained QEP Scholars using the appropriate AAC&U LEAP VALUE rubric, resulting in 540 total scores per year. This sample size provides sufficient power to generalize findings across the Colonnade population while ensuring that each QEP Scholar will be assigned a manageable number of artifacts to score each year (approximately 50 total or 25 per semester).

Assessment Instruments

Each artifact will be assessed using the relevant AAC&U VALUE rubric, selected based on the target skill identified by the course (i.e., Critical Thinking, Oral Communication, Written Communication). The VALUE rubrics (Appendices 6, 7, and 8) are nationally recognized, research-based instruments that employ a four-point scale that maps well to the developmental trajectory defined by WKU's adaptation of the KGP: Benchmark (Introduced), Milestone 2 (Developed), Milestone 3 (Reinforced), and Capstone (Mastery - reserved for majors).

Scorer Training and Calibration

To ensure scoring reliability and consistency, all QEP Scholars will participate in annual calibration sessions facilitated by assessment coordinators. These sessions will:

- Review the purpose and structure of the VALUE rubrics
- Orient scorers to the logistics of the artifact repository and digital scoring system
- Use benchmark artifacts to establish common expectations
- Calibrate scores to investigate interrater reliability

Annual norming sessions will be held to ensure that any new QEP Scholars are trained and returning scholars continue to be calibrated. Each artifact will be scored independently by two QEP Scholars. In cases where significant scoring discrepancies arise (more than two points), a third Scholar will be assigned to provide an adjudicating score.

Baseline and Target Scores

In Year 1 of implementation, we will establish baseline performance levels by scoring the full annual sample (270 artifacts across 9 strata) using each of the AAC&U LEAP VALUE rubrics. This baseline data will inform our incremental goals for subsequent years and provide a starting point for longitudinal tracking. The student learning outcome sets a long-term target of an average of 80% or more of artifacts assessed demonstrating competency (milestone level 3 or higher) on each KGP skill. Progress toward this target will be monitored annually against the Year 1 baseline. If the initial baseline performance is significantly lower than 80%, we will establish interim goals to demonstrate incremental improvement over time.

Student Learning Outcome 2 (SLO 2):

By the end of The Colonnade Program, at least 80% of students assessed will (1) report Early Application (level 3) or higher in targeted KGP skills (critical thinking, written/oral communication) on the NACE Career Readiness Student Competency Assessment, and (2) earn a score of 3 or higher on their written reflection of skill development as assessed using the KGP Reflection Scoring Rubric.

Faculty Role in Embedding Reflection and Self-Assessment Opportunities

Faculty teaching Colonnade courses that submit Key Assessment Artifacts for SLO 1 will also encourage students to complete the NACE Career Readiness Student Competency Assessment and a brief written reflection on their skill development. Faculty will embed the following common reflection prompt within the course's end-of-term activities:

> **Prompt**: *Reflect on how this course helped you develop your critical thinking and/or communication skills. Provide specific examples of your growth and describe how you might use these skills in future academic, personal, or professional settings.*

This prompt is designed to elicit intentional self-reflection. Faculty will decide if they incorporate the prompt as a graded or ungraded class activity but will not be responsible for scoring the reflections for assessment purposes. These reflections, alongside the NACE self-assessment, will be collected through the centralized assessment infrastructure for scoring by trained QEP Scholars.

Sampling Strategy

All students enrolled in Colonnade courses that submit Key Assessment Artifacts for SLO 1 will also be encouraged to complete the NACE Career Readiness Student Competency Assessment as part of the end-of-course process. Because the instrument is self-administered, requires no scoring by QEP Scholars, and is embedded into the existing QEP infrastructure, we will collect and analyze data from the entire population of students participating (census) in artifact submission.

Written reflections will be collected and sampled using the same stratified strategy as noted in the sampling strategy section for SLO1.

Assessment Instruments

1. **NACE Career Readiness Student Competency Assessment** - a self-report tool that asks students to rate their level of development in each of the eight NACE competencies. The QEP assessment team will analyze student responses in the areas of critical thinking and communication (Appendix 9). The four-point scale includes the categories Emerging Knowledge, Understanding, Early Application, and Advanced Application.

2. **KGP Reflection Scoring Rubric** (Appendix 10) – A direct assessment instrument designed to measure metacognitive awareness of skill development. The rubric includes three criteria: recognition of skill development, connection to course experiences, and metacognitive insight. Each criterion is scored on a four-point scale. Students' written responses to the common reflection prompt will be scored by trained QEP Scholars using this rubric.

Scorer Training and Validation

QEP Scholars will receive training in scoring student reflections using the QEP Reflection Scoring Rubric. In Year 1, the rubric will be piloted exclusively by the QEP Scholar team to test for usability and clarity. As part of this pilot, we will conduct a Lawshe content validity analysis, asking content experts to rate the essentiality of each rubric criterion to ensure the instrument adequately captures the intended construct of student metacognition regarding skill development.

Scorer calibration sessions will be conducted annually to establish interrater reliability and scoring consistency, like the protocol used for SLO 1 artifact scoring.

Baseline and Target Scores

In Year 1, we will collect NACE self-assessment data and scored reflection responses to establish baseline measures for both instruments. The long-term goal for the self-assessment is that at least 80% of students will report reaching level 3 (Early Application) or higher in both critical thinking and communication (oral/written). For the reflection, we will analyze average total rubric scores and identify the percentage of students achieving proficiency across all rubric dimensions. If baseline results fall below the 80% threshold, incremental benchmarks will be established for continuous improvement to achieve 80% proficiency by the end of the QEP period.

Process Monitoring and Implementation Assessment Plan

While the primary focus of this QEP assessment centers on the student learning outcomes (SLOs), we recognize that implementation will require the successful execution of key activities. Consequently, we will monitor several short-term outcomes and outputs that reflect the necessary foundational processes for the QEP to achieve longer-term goals. These measures are not designed to evaluate construct quality or impact, but rather they are intended to monitor implementation elements such as course alignment, artifact submission, scorer calibration, and student participation to ensure these activities are occurring as planned. These descriptive indicators will help us identify early barriers, support continuous improvement, and reinforce institutional accountability throughout the life of the QEP.

We will monitor:

1. Colonnade Course Alignment Completion

- **Construct:** Number and percentage of Colonnade courses that have completed alignment of course outcomes to KGP skills, identified Key Assessment Artifacts, and indicated the level of emphasis (Introduced, Developed, Reinforced). *NOTE: All 10 KGP skills will be mapped across The Colonnade, but the QEP assessment focus is limited to Critical Thinking, Oral Communication, and Written Communication*
- **Rationale:** Alignment ensures courses are structured to contribute to the assessment of student learning outcomes. Without this foundation, artifact collection and outcome measurement are not possible.
- **Measure:** Percent of eligible Colonnade courses with complete (KGP skill, emphasis level, and accessibility) alignment documentation on file.
- **Target:** 75% of eligible courses aligned by the end of Year 1; 100% by the end of Year 2 and maintained thereafter.

2. Artifact Submission Compliance

- **Construct:** Percentage of eligible Colonnade courses that submit required student artifacts into the centralized assessment system each semester.
- **Rationale:** Reliable and representative data collection depends on consistent artifact submission across The Colonnade Program. Sampling can only occur if sufficient artifacts are submitted.
- **Measure:** Percent of required artifacts submitted relative to expected submissions each academic term.
- **Target:** 75% submission rate each term beginning in Year 2 of implementation.

3. Faculty Engagement in Calibration and Training

- **Constructs:** Participation rate of QEP Scholars in annual calibration and scoring training sessions. Artifact scoring reliability targets.
- **Rationale:** Reliable assessment of student artifacts depends on normed scoring practices and trained raters.

- **Measure:** Percentage of QEP Scholars attending calibration training and demonstrating scoring agreement.
- **Target:** 100% of QEP Scholars trained annually, with 85% or higher interrater agreement on benchmark samples.

4. Student Participation in Self-Assessment

- **Construct:** Percentage of students in selected Colonnade courses who complete the NACE self-assessment instrument and written reflections.
- **Rationale:** Student self-report data provides the indirect measure of their perceived development of key competencies described in SLO 2. The direct measure of their perceived development helps triangulate inferences made about SLO 2.
- **Measure:** Course-level participation rates in completing the NACE self-assessment and written reflections.
- **Target:** 50% or higher completion rate in sampled Colonnade courses beginning in Year 2.

5. Utilization of Assessment Data for Continuous Improvement

- **Construct:** Evidence that assessment findings are reviewed and used by faculty and leadership to inform instructional decisions and curricular adjustments.
- **Rationale:** Closing the loop is a key expectation of the QEP process and essential for sustaining meaningful change. We cannot and should not collect these data without systematic review and adjustments.
- **Measure:** Documented examples of sharing analyses with academic leaders; documented examples of data-informed action.
- **Target:** Multiple examples of analyses and adjustments each academic year beginning in Year 2.

6. TILT Training and Assignment Integration

- **Construct:** a.) Number and percentage of Colonnade faculty who complete CITL TILT training; b.) number and percentage of assignments that align with TILT principles (SLO 1)
- **Rationale:** TILT-aligned assignment design supports students' awareness of and engagement with targeted KGP skills.
- **Measure:** a.) Track the number and percentage of Colonnade faculty completing TILT training; b.) Evaluate the assignments leading to artifacts submitted for SLO 1 with brief TILT-alignment scoring tool (Appendix 11)
- **Target:** a.) 75% of Colonnade faculty trained in TILT by end of Year 2; b.) 75% of assignments submitted for SLO 1 rated as "TILT-aligned" by Year 3

Table 5

Student Learning Outcome Assessment Plan Table Based on Toppers R.I.S.E. Logic Model (Figure 7)

Student Learning Outcome	Sample	Instrument	Indicator	Responsible Party	Timeline/Frequency
SLO #1: Students demonstrate observable growth in KGP skills.	Stratified sample (see associated narrative) of aligned artifacts. 3x3 stratified matrix = 270 artifacts per year.	LEAP VALUE rubrics [Critical Thinking, Written Communication, Oral Communication]	By the end of Colonnade, 80% of assessed artifacts scored at milestone level 3 or higher on LEAP VALUE rubrics	QEP Director organizes data collection and analyses QEP Scholars score artifacts	Artifacts collected and scored per semester Data is analyzed and reported annually
SLO #2: Students demonstrate metacognitive awareness of KGP skills development	Census approach, including all submissions of NACE student self-assessments	NACE Competency Assessment Tool - Student Version [Critical Thinking and Communication]	By the end of Colonnade, 80% of students assessed report Early Application (level 3) or higher on NACE rubrics	QEP Director organizes data collection and analysis	Assessments completed each semester Data is analyzed and reported annually

Table 6

Process Monitoring and Implementation Assessment Plan

Construct	Unit of Analysis	Instrument/Measure	Indicator/Target	Responsible Party	Timeline/Frequency
1. Colonnade Course Alignment Completion	All eligible Colonnade courses	Alignment submission form (KGP skill, emphasis level, accessibility)	75% aligned by the end of Year 1; 100% by the end of Year 2, and maintained thereafter	QEP Director; Department Heads	Monitored each semester; reported annually
2. Artifact Submission Compliance	Courses selected for artifact submission	Artifact submission logs	75% submission rate each term beginning in Year 2	QEP Director; Colonnade faculty	Each academic term
3. Faculty Engagement in Calibration and Training	All QEP Scholars	Attendance logs; calibration scores on benchmark artifacts	100% trained annually; 85% or higher interrater agreement	Assessment Committee; QEP Director	Annual training prior to scoring
4. Student Participation in Self-Assessment	Students in selected Colonnade courses	NACE self-assessment completion data	50% or higher completion rate beginning in Year 2	Course Instructors; QEP Coordinator	Each academic term
5. Utilization of Assessment Data for Continuous Improvement	Academic units; leadership teams	Documented examples of data use (meeting notes, revised syllabi, etc.)	Multiple documented examples each academic year	QEP Director; QEP Advisory Board; Deans; CITL	Reviewed and compiled annually
6. TILT Training and Assignment Integration	a.) Colonnade faculty; b.) Artifact assignments	a.) CITL training records; b.) TILT-alignment rubric for assignments	a.) 75% faculty trained by end of Year 2; b.) 75% of artifacts TILT-aligned by Year 3	CITL; QEP Director; Assessment Committee	a.) Monitored annually, b.) Each semester

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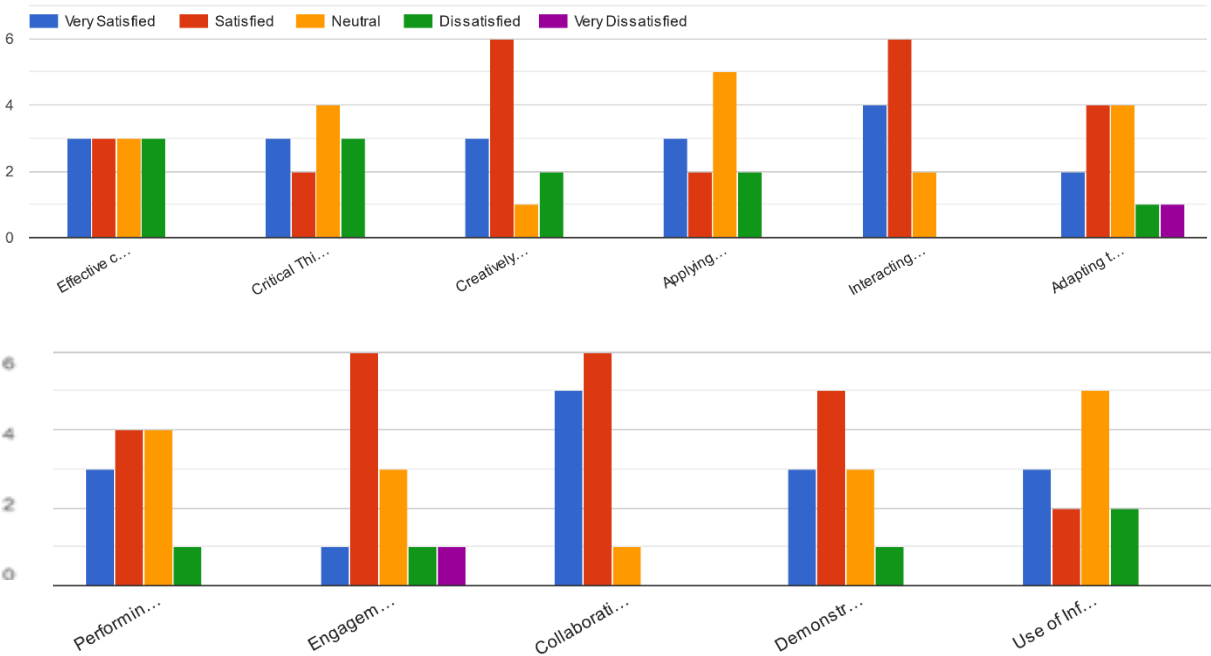## Appendix 1: Results of Employer Surveys

Employer Perceptions of New Hire College Graduates' Competencies

How would you rate the overall competency of new hire college graduates in your organization?
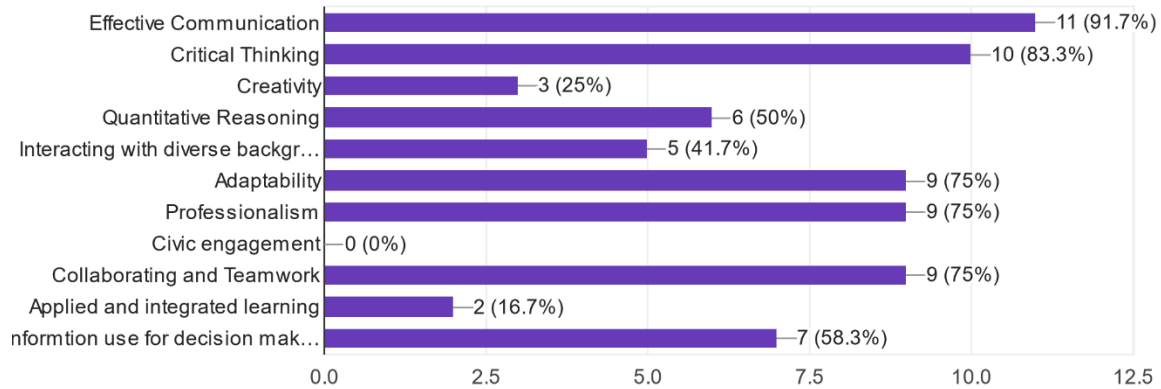11 responses
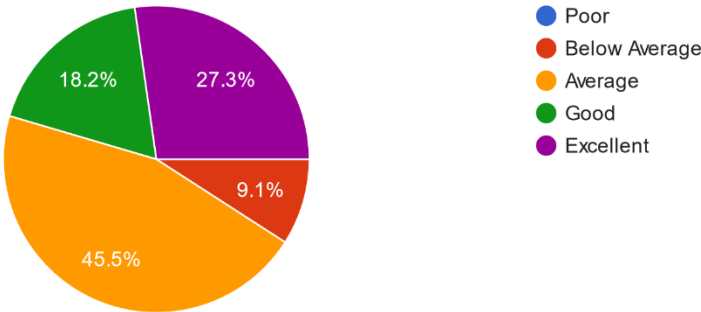
Please evaluate the following competencies of new hire college graduates in your organization.
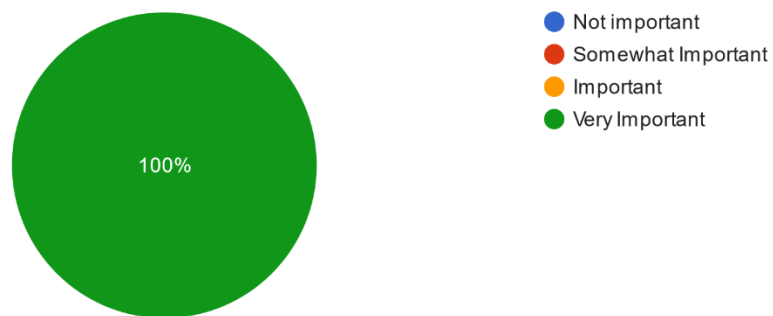
Which of the following skills do you consider most critical for your organization? (Select all that apply)

12 responses

How important is it for new hire college graduates to have strong skills in Effective Communication?

12 responses

How important is it for new hire college graduates to have strong skills in Critical Thinking?

12 responses

Legend:
- Not Important
- Somewhat important
- Important
- Very Important

75%

8.3%

16.7%
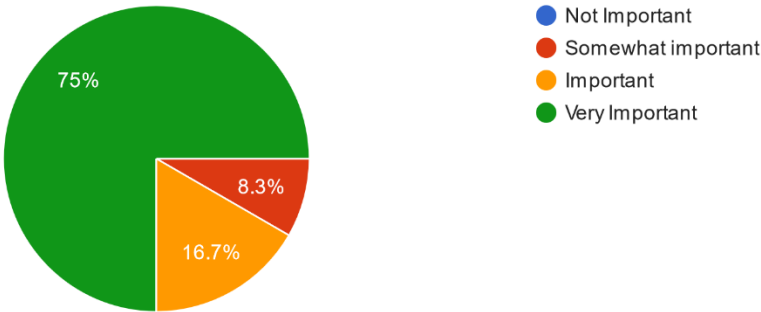
How important is it for new hire college graduates to have strong skills in Quantitative Reasoning?

12 responses

Legend:
- Not important
- Somewhat important
- Important
- Very important

41.7%

16.7%

41.7%
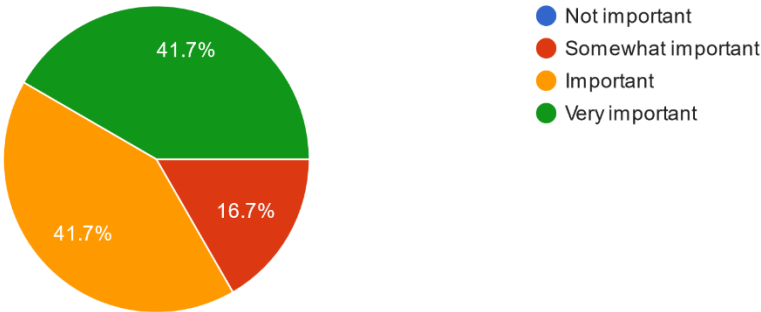
How important is it for new hire college graduates to have strong skills in Collaboration and Teamwork?

12 responses

Legend:
- Not important
- Somewhat important
- Important
- Very important

83.3%

16.7%
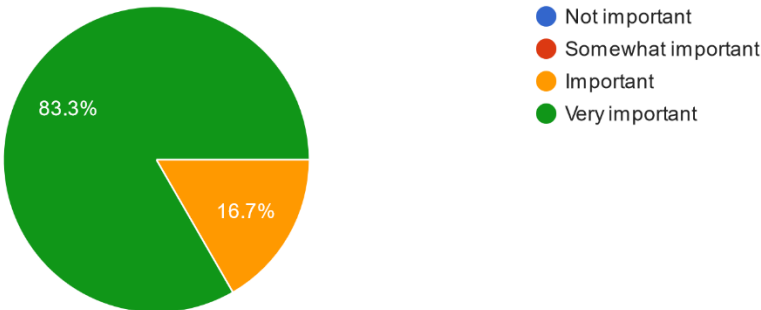
What specific skills do you find most lacking in new hire college graduates?

- Adaptability, Resourcefulness (ability to find solutions without direct involvement from a supervisor)
- Most organizations rely on Windows Office products, but there appears to be a lack of skill with even basic items in Excel, Word, and Powerpoint. Occasionally there is also a disconnect with professional communication.
- Problem Solving, engaging with other generations, critical thinking
- Problem solving, independent thinking, self motivation.
- Limited or no experience using Microsoft Office
- We have been fortunate to work with very skilled graduates.
- taking initiative and rationalizing next steps
- Creatively coming up with new ways to solve problems
- Only manufacturing experience...and that comes with time.
- Self management and self direction
- Communicating in person

What recommendations do you have for universities to better prepare students for the workforce?

- Professional communication, specifically email communications would be helpful if it was emphasized. So many students grew up with and utilize Google Docs, that they don't have the skills to utilize the equivalent Microsoft Office products used by companies.
- Increased training in active listening, two-way communication, time management, emotional intelligence, especially self-awareness. Critical Thinking that fosters creative solutions and being open to new ideas.
- Self motivation, problem solving, critical thinking- real world examples.
- Communication, Attendance and Collaboration should be demonstrated in all areas of learning.
- Encourage internships or part-time work in their fields.
- integrated practical experience within the course work
- If possible, ask students to show/be creative on projects
- I recommend that you encourage internship and/or coop opportunities within the workforce of interest.
- AI AI AI AI AI
- Being able to know when it's best to effectively communicate in person vs. behind a screen.

Any additional comments or suggestions?

- We've had to put an enormous training investment into our employees- new hires included to teach them problem solving, critical thinking, etc to make them a viable employee for us
- Most of our new graduates have trouble communicating timely and effectively. Timeliness and Attendance don't seem to be a concern for many.
- Real-world projects
- We have been very happy with the recent graduates that we have hired
- Remind your students that real world and book knowledge doesn't always go hand in hand. Agility is very important when it comes to the real world.

Appendix 2: Focus Group Invitation

Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

PROVOST'S MESSAGE

Dear Colleagues,

The Provost Office invites you to take part in a focus group discussion to provide perspectives on what should be WKU's next Quality Enhancement Program (QEP). Western Kentucky University will submit its 10-year documentation for reaffirmation of regional accreditation to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) in 2025. Part of the reaffirmation process is the development of a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), which, "reflects and affirms a commitment to enhance overall institutional quality and effectiveness by focusing on an issue that the institution considers important to improving student learning outcomes and/or student success."

As a part of our initial stage of determining the next QEP, **we are reaching out to key stakeholders to obtain ideas and insights into possible QEP topics that can improve student learning and/or student success across campus**. Your important input will be used to guide the determination and design of a comprehensive QEP project for WKU.

A round of faculty and staff focus groups will be conducted in September of 2022. Upcoming focus group opportunities are listed below. **Please select the link below and complete the registration form for your chosen focus group based on your campus role.**

After you complete registration you will receive an e-mail confirmation, **please hold that time on your calendar.** The meetings will take place in Wetherby 227 and additional materials will be sent to you prior to your scheduled meeting. Thank you for your interest and input.

Faculty Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Focus Group
    Max participants = 20
    Tuesday, September 6 9:00a - 10:00a
    Wetherby 227

Staff Quality Enhance Plan (QEP) Focus Group
Max participants = 20
Thursday, September 8 1:30p - 2:30p
Wetherby 227\

Faculty Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Focus Group
Max participants = 20
Wednesday, September 14 9:00a - 10:00a
Wetherby 227

Staff Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Focus Group
    Max participants = 20
    Wednesday, September 14 10:30a - 11:30a
    Wetherby 227

Faculty Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Focus Group
    Max participants = 20
    Wednesday, September 14 3:00p - 4:00p
    Wetherby 227

Faculty Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Focus Group
    Max participants = 20
    Tuesday, September 27 3:00p - 4:00p
    Wetherby 227

Staff Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Focus Group
    Max participants = 20
    Wednesday, September 28 3:00p - 4:00p
        Wetherby 227

Staff Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Focus Group
    Max participants = 20
    Thursday, September 29 3:00p - 4:00p
    Wetherby 227

Appendix 3: Final Topic Selection Invitation

WKU

Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

PROVOST'S MESSAGE

Dear Colleagues,

As you know, in 2025 Western Kentucky University will submit its 10-year documentation for reaffirmation of regional accreditation to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). Part of the reaffirmation process is the development of a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that "reflects and affirms a commitment to enhance overall institutional quality and effectiveness by focusing on an issue that the institution considers important to improving student learning outcomes and/or student success."

During Spring and Fall semesters of 2022, we invited the campus community to provide QEP ideas that would improve student learning outcomes and/or student success in the form of a proposal, as well as the opportunity to participate in faculty, staff, and student focus groups. This process was extremely productive and many excellent project ideas were proposed and discussed. After looking at all the data collected from these processes, seven common threads emerged as potential candidates WKU's next QEP.

We are now seeking your help, one last time, in selecting the final topic. The link below is a survey giving our entire campus community the opportunity to rank-order these seven ideas according to preference.

https://wku.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6ihuYBZrP1xlrhA *(survey on next page)*

Thank you for all the time and input you have given to help make this a truly collaborative process.

Sincerely,
Robert "Bud" Fischer
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, KY 42101
Office: (270) 745-2297
Email: robert.fischer@wku.edu
Web: www.wku.edu/academicaffairs

WKU

Once again, thank you for your participation in this process. Selecting our next QEP is an important task and collaboration is key. Below are the seven common threads that emerged as potential campus-wide projects aimed at enhancing WKU's overall quality and effectiveness in terms of student success. To continue the QEP determination process, please rank-order the seven topics according to your preference.

Thank you for your participation.

Place a one (1) **in the box to the left for your first choice, a two (2) for your second choice, a three (3) for your third choice, and so on, with 7 being your last choice. When you are finished, please click the arrow and the bottom of the survey to submit your ranking.**

o **The Graduate Profile:** The "Graduate Profile" refers to workforce skills based on the 10 Essential Skills identified by higher education organizations and workforce professionals as learning outcomes all graduates need for success in their chosen fields of study. Click here for more information.

o **Expanded First-year Experience:** The Expanded First Year Experience (FYE) program would include offering a multiyear initiative that would increase the accessibility of learning communities and expanding first-year resources to all residential and commuting students beyond the first two semesters.

o **Student Wellness:** Wellness, broadly defined, is "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO)."

o **Literacy:** This can include, but is not limited to, media literacy, cultural literacy, financial literacy, scientific literacy, information literacy, critical literacy, health literacy, and recreational literacy.

o **Career Development:** "Career [development) is a foundation from which to demonstrate requisite core competencies that broadly prepare the college educated for success in the workplace and lifelong career management (NACE)."

o **Improving Advising:** This can include streamlining services, enhancing the transfer process, creating flexible degree pathways, connecting Colonnade courses to degree programs, etc.

o **Experiential & ARP-lied Learning:** Though there are many definitions for experiential & applied learning, the idea is to give students the opportunity to apply knowledge and/or skills gained from traditional classroom learning to hands-on/real-world settings, creative projects, or research. These activities can occur independent from the traditional classroom experience or they can be embedded in a course.

Appendix 4: Final Topic Selection Results

Default Report
QEP Survey 2022
December 9th 2022, 4:04 pm CST

Q1 - Place a one (1) in the box to the left for your first choice, a two (2) for your second choice, a three (3) for your third choice, and so on, with 7 being your last choice. When you are finished, please click the arrow and the bottom of the survey to submit your ranking

#	Question	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		Total
1	The Graduate Profile:	22.70%	96	15.37%	65	12.29%	52	11.82%	50	9.69%	41	12.29%	52	15.84%	67	423
2	Expanded First-year Experience:	9.81%	41	10.53%	44	14.35%	60	12.20%	51	12.68%	53	17.22%	72	23.21%	97	418
3	Student Wellness:	16.39%	70	11.01%	47	14.99%	64	13.11%	56	17.80%	76	14.99%	64	11.71%	50	427
4	Literacy:	13.66%	59	19.68%	85	14.81%	64	12.73%	55	13.43%	58	12.04%	52	13.66%	59	432
5	Career Development:	10.35%	44	19.06%	81	19.06%	81	18.12%	77	13.88%	59	10.82%	46	8.71%	37	425
6	Improving Advising	16.00%	68	15.06%	64	11.76%	50	16.00%	68	13.18%	56	15.53%	66	12.47%	53	425
7	Experiential/Applied Learning	20.64%	90	17.89%	78	19.27%	84	11.93%	52	12.61%	55	10.78%	47	6.88%	30	436

Appendix 5: Example of Subcommittee Ideas for Implementation

Overview: Student Success

Regarding student success, there are numerous student success programs in each college and several programs across the university. The Academic and Student Support has links to the Learning Center, Summer Scholars Program, Cornerstone Program, Best Expectations Program, Academic Standing Workshops, and College Readiness.

What resources would be needed to realize this vision?

- While there is an abundance of resources across the campus, there are opportunities to collaborate and implement these resources into course curriculum that would make learning outcomes relevant for students' future career skills.
- Implement career and academic skills throughout the students' academic career through curriculum, informational workshops, and one-shot course presentations.
- Advocate for career and academic services.
- Collect data regarding the progress of the goals

Develop SMART GOALS:

Specific: What exactly do we want to accomplish? What actions can we take to make this happen?

- Embed career development into courses that forces a student to learn more about their career and start a long-term plan.
- Mandate that students are awarded essential workforce skills early into their major.
- Career assessment to help students further understand their field.
- Create online resources such as learning modules that students complete as they complete their degree that provides information to support career skills necessary for their field.
- Mentorship and network programs that include alumni or leaders in the field supporting
- students' future careers.
- Create career development newsletters which will highlight students, employers, and faculty.

Measurable: What data do we need to collect to measure the outcome?

- Outcomes would be measured by creating and adhering to a Career Development Scaffolding system.
- o Responsible Party-WKU Faculty
- o First year – Introductory information about the career and expectations of college
- o Second year – Explore more of the field through research and student memberships to organizations, societies, and associations.
- o Third year – develop the required skills in the field.
- o Fourth year – prepare for the job field through internships and career development.

- Pre/Post test assessments can be conducted to measure students knowledge of industry and soft skills competencies. Microcredentials (badges) would be given to students to place on their resumes and LinkedIn profiles.
- o Responsible Party-ACDC Staff

- Develop a Career Board comprised of ACDC career team, employers, and students

- o Meet once a month to discuss students, internships, and progress
- o Only expense would be breakfast or lunch
- o This could begin in the Fall 2024
- o This is measurable and achievable; done in Career Center

- Career Newsletter - electronic version that comes out once a semester
- o Data driven and would highlight career fairs and its success
- o Highlight number of students doing internships and provide photos of them on site
- o Employer spotlight
- o This is measurable and achievable; Done in the Career Center

- Career Guide-PDF document
- o To assist students with the career exploration and preparation process.
- o This document will be available for the entire WKU community.

Achievable: How "doable" are these projects? Do we have the necessary skills and resources? Do we need more?
- These projects are very doable by involving various stakeholders: ACDC Staff, Local & Regional Employers, WKU Faculty and Staff, and WKU Alumni.
- Currently, WKU possesses following resources: WKU Alumni Association, Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce, Provost Office, National Association of Colleges and Employers.

Relevant: How do the goals of this group align with the other subgroups as well as the broader goals of Toppers R.I.S.E. ?
- A successful career transition plan for students, aligns perfectly with the institution's Strategic
- Plan.

Time-Bound: What is the time frame for accomplishing the goals over the course of the five-year period (The QEP will cover 2025-2030)?

Conclusions:
Based on the above analysis, how do these ideas/goals shape WKU's QEP, Toppers R.I.S.E?
How can it be marketed? Who are the stakeholders?

CRITICAL THINKING **VALUE** RUBRIC

for more information, please contact value@aacu.org

The VALUE rubrics were developed by teams of faculty experts representing colleges and universities across the United States through a process that examined many existing campus rubrics and related documents for each learning outcome and incorporated additional feedback from faculty. The rubrics articulate fundamental criteria for each learning outcome, with performance descriptors demonstrating progressively more sophisticated levels of attainment. The rubrics are intended for institutional-level use in evaluating and discussing student learning, not for grading. The core expectations articulated in all 15 of the VALUE rubrics can and should be translated into the language of individual campuses, disciplines, and even courses. The utility of the VALUE rubrics is to position learning at all undergraduate levels within a basic framework of expectations such that evidence of learning can by shared nationally through a common dialog and understanding of student success.

Definition
Critical thinking is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.

Framing Language
This rubric is designed to be transdisciplinary, reflecting the recognition that success in all disciplines requires habits of inquiry and analysis that share common attributes. Further, research suggests that successful critical thinkers from all disciplines increasingly need to be able to apply those habits in various and changing situations encountered in all walks of life.

This rubric is designed for use with many different types of assignments and the suggestions here are not an exhaustive list of possibilities. Critical thinking can be demonstrated in assignments that require students to complete analyses of text, data, or issues. Assignments that cut across presentation mode might be especially useful in some fields. If insight into the process components of critical thinking (e.g., how information sources were evaluated regardless of whether they were included in the product) is important, assignments focused on student reflection might be especially illuminating.

Glossary
The definitions that follow were developed to clarify terms and concepts used in this rubric only.

- Ambiguity: Information that may be interpreted in more than one way.
- Assumptions: Ideas, conditions, or beliefs (often implicit or unstated) that are "taken for granted or accepted as true without proof." (quoted from www.dictionary.reference.com/browse/assumptions)
- Context: The historical, ethical. political, cultural, environmental, or circumstantial settings or conditions that influence and complicate the consideration of any issues, ideas, artifacts, and events.
- Literal meaning: Interpretation of information exactly as stated. For example, "she was green with envy" would be interpreted to mean that her skin was green.
- Metaphor: Information that is (intended to be) interpreted in a non-literal way. For example, "she was green with envy" is intended to convey an intensity of emotion, not a skin color.

CRITICAL THINKING VALUE RUBRIC

for more information, please contact value@aacu.org

Association of American Colleges and Universities

Definition

Critical thinking is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

	Capstone	Milestones		Benchmark
	4	3	2	1
Explanation of issues	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated, described, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unknown.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated without clarification or description.
Evidence *Selecting and using information to investigate a point of view or conclusion*	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are questioned thoroughly.	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are subject to questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) with some interpretation/evaluation, but not enough to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are taken as mostly fact, with little questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/evaluation. Viewpoints of experts are taken as fact, without question.
Influence of context and assumptions	Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position.	Identifies own and others' assumptions and several relevant contexts when presenting a position.	Questions some assumptions. Identifies several relevant contexts when presenting a position. May be more aware of others' assumptions than one's own (or vice versa).	Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions). Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a position.
Student's position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis)	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is imaginative, taking into account the complexities of an issue. Limits of position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) are acknowledged. Others' points of view are synthesized within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis).	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) takes into account the complexities of an issue. Others' points of view are acknowledged within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis).	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) acknowledges different sides of an issue.	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is stated, but is simplistic and obvious.
Conclusions and related outcomes (implications and consequences)	Conclusions and related outcomes (consequences and implications) are logical and reflect student's informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspectives discussed in priority order.	Conclusion is logically tied to a range of information, including opposing viewpoints; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.	Conclusion is logically tied to information (because information is chosen to fit the desired conclusion); some related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.	Conclusion is inconsistently tied to some of the information discussed; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are oversimplified.

Appendix 7: Oral Communication VALUE Rubric

ORAL COMMUNICATION VALUE RUBRIC

for more information, please contact value@aacu.org

The VALUE rubrics were developed by teams of faculty experts representing colleges and universities across the United States through a process that examined many existing campus rubrics and related documents for each learning outcome and incorporated additional feedback from faculty. The rubrics articulate fundamental criteria for each learning outcome, with performance descriptors demonstrating progressively more sophisticated levels of attainment. The rubrics are intended for institutional-level use in evaluating and discussing student learning, not for grading. The core expectations articulated in all 15 of the VALUE rubrics can and should be translated into the language of individual campuses, disciplines, and even courses. The utility of the VALUE rubrics is to position learning at all undergraduate levels within a basic framework of expectations such that evidence of learning can by shared nationally through a common dialog and understanding of student success.

The type of oral communication most likely to be included in a collection of student work is an oral presentation and therefore is the focus for the application of this rubric.

Definition
Oral communication is a prepared, purposeful presentation designed to increase knowledge, to foster understanding, or to promote change in the listeners' attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors.

Framing Language
Oral communication takes many forms. This rubric is specifically designed to evaluate oral presentations of a single speaker at a time and is best applied to live or video-recorded presentations. For panel presentations or group presentations, it is recommended that each speaker be evaluated separately. This rubric best applies to presentations of sufficient length such that a central message is conveyed, supported by one or more forms of supporting materials and includes a purposeful organization. An oral answer to a single question not designed to be structured into a presentation does not readily apply to this rubric.

Glossary
The definitions that follow were developed to clarify terms and concepts used in this rubric only.

- Central message: The main point/thesis/"bottom line"/"take-away" of a presentation. A clear central message is easy to identify; a compelling central message is also vivid and memorable.
- Delivery techniques: Posture, gestures, eye contact, and use of the voice. Delivery techniques enhance the effectiveness of the presentation when the speaker stands and moves with authority, looks more often at the audience than at his/her speaking materials/notes, uses the voice expressively, and uses few vocal fillers ("um," "uh," "like," "you know," etc.).
- Language: Vocabulary, terminology, and sentence structure. Language that supports the effectiveness of a presentation is appropriate to the topic and audience, grammatical, clear, and free from bias. Language that enhances the effectiveness of a presentation is also vivid, imaginative, and expressive.
- Organization: The grouping and sequencing of ideas and supporting material in a presentation. An organizational pattern that supports the effectiveness of a presentation typically includes an introduction, one or more identifiable sections in the body of the speech, and a conclusion. An organizational pattern that enhances the effectiveness of the presentation reflects a purposeful choice among possible alternatives, such as a chronological pattern, a problem-solution pattern, an analysis-of-parts pattern, etc., that makes the content of the presentation easier to follow and more likely to accomplish its purpose.
- Supporting material: Explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities, and other kinds of information or analysis that supports the principal ideas of the presentation. Supporting material is generally credible when it is relevant and derived from reliable and appropriate sources. Supporting material is highly credible when it is also vivid and varied across the types listed above (e.g., a mix of examples, statistics, and references to authorities). Supporting material may also serve the purpose of establishing the speakers credibility. For example, in presenting a creative work such as a dramatic reading of Shakespeare, supporting evidence may not advance the ideas of Shakespeare, but rather serve to establish the speaker as a credible Shakespearean actor.

ORAL COMMUNICATION VALUE RUBRIC

for more information, please contact value@aacu.org

Definition

Oral communication is a prepared, purposeful presentation designed to increase knowledge, to foster understanding, or to promote change in the listeners' attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors.

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

	Capstone 4	Milestones 3	Milestones 2	Benchmark 1
Organization	Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is clearly and consistently observable and is skillful and makes the content of the presentation cohesive.	Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is clearly and consistently observable within the presentation.	Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is intermittently observable within the presentation.	Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is not observable within the presentation.
Language	Language choices are imaginative, memorable, and compelling, and enhance the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate to audience.	Language choices are thoughtful and generally support the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate to audience.	Language choices are mundane and commonplace and partially support the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate to audience.	Language choices are unclear and minimally support the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is not appropriate to audience.
Delivery	Delivery techniques (posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) make the presentation compelling, and speaker appears polished and confident.	Delivery techniques (posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) make the presentation interesting, and speaker appears comfortable.	Delivery techniques (posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) make the presentation understandable, and speaker appears tentative.	Delivery techniques (posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) detract from the understandability of the presentation, and speaker appears uncomfortable.
Supporting Material	A variety of types of supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make appropriate reference to information or analysis that significantly supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.	Supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make appropriate reference to information or analysis that generally supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.	Supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make appropriate reference to information or analysis that partially supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.	Insufficient supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make reference to information or analysis that minimally supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.
Central Message	Central message is compelling (precisely stated, appropriately repeated, memorable, and strongly supported.)	Central message is clear and consistent with the supporting material.	Central message is basically understandable but is not often repeated and is not memorable.	Central message can be deduced, but is not explicitly stated in the presentation.

Appendix 8: Written Communication VALUE Rubric

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION VALUE RUBRIC
for more information, please contact value@aacu.org

The VALUE rubrics were developed by teams of faculty experts representing colleges and universities across the United States through a process that examined many existing campus rubrics and related documents for each learning outcome and incorporated additional feedback from faculty. The rubrics articulate fundamental criteria for each learning outcome, with performance descriptors demonstrating progressively more sophisticated levels of attainment. The rubrics are intended for institutional-level use in evaluating and discussing student learning, not for grading. The core expectations articulated in all 15 of the VALUE rubrics can and should be translated into the language of individual campuses, disciplines, and even courses. The utility of the VALUE rubrics is to position learning at all undergraduate levels within a basic framework of expectations such that evidence of learning can by shared nationally through a common dialog and understanding of student success.

Definition

Written communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images. Written communication abilities develop through iterative experiences across the curriculum.

Framing Language

This writing rubric is designed for use in a wide variety of educational institutions. The most clear finding to emerge from decades of research on writing assessment is that the best writing assessments are locally determined and sensitive to local context and mission. Users of this rubric should, in the end, consider making adaptations and additions that clearly link the language of the rubric to individual campus contexts.

This rubric focuses assessment on how specific written work samples or collectios of work respond to specific contexts. The central question guiding the rubric is "How well does writing respond to the needs of audience(s) for the work?" In focusing on this question the rubric does not attend to other aspects of writing that are equally important: issues of writing process, writing strategies, writers' fluency with different modes of textual production or publication, or writer's growing engagement with writing and disciplinarity through the process of writing.

Evaluators using this rubric must have information about the assignments or purposes for writing guiding writers' work. Also recommended is including reflective work samples of collections of work that address such questions as: What decisions did the writer make about audience, purpose, and genre as s/he compiled the work in the portfolio? How are those choices evident in the writing -- in the content, organization and structure, reasoning, evidence, mechanical and surface conventions, and citational systems used in the writing? This will enable evaluators to have a clear sense of how writers understand the assignments and take it into consideration as they evaluate.

The first section of this rubric addresses the context and purpose for writing. A work sample or collections of work can convey the context and purpose for the writing tasks it showcases by including the writing assignments associated with work samples. But writers may also convey the context and purpose for their writing within the texts. It is important for faculty and institutions to include directions for students about how they should represent their writing contexts and purposes.

Faculty interested in the research on writing assessment that has guided our work here can consult the National Council of Teachers of English/Council of Writing Program Administrators' White Paper on Writing Assessment (2008; www.wpacouncil.org/whitepaper) and the Conference on College Composition and Communication's Writing Assessment: A Position Statement (2008; www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/123784.htm)

Glossary

The definitions that follow were developed to clarify terms and concepts used in this rubric only.

- Content Development: The ways in which the text explores and represents its topic in relation to its audience and purpose.
- Context of and purpose for writing: The context of writing is the situation surrounding a text: who is reading it? who is writing it? Under what circumstances will the text be shared or circulated? What social or political factors might affect how the text is composed or interpreted? The purpose for writing is the writer's intended effect on an audience. Writers might want to persuade or inform; they might want to report or summarize information; they might want to work through complexity or confusion; they might want to argue with other writers, or connect with other writers; they might want to convey urgency or amuse; they might write for themselves or for an assignment or to remember.
- Disciplinary conventions: Formal and informal rules that constitute what is seen generally as appropriate within different academic fields, e.g. introductory strategies, use of passive voice or first person point of view, expectations for thesis or hypothesis, expectations for kinds of evidence and support that are appropriate to the task at hand, use of primary and secondary sources to provide evidence and support arguments and to document critical perspectives on the topic. Writers will incorporate sources according to disciplinary and genre conventions, according to the writer's purpose for the text. Through increasingly sophisticated use of sources, writers develop an ability to differentiate between their own ideas and the ideas of others, credit and build upon work already accomplished in the field or issue they are addressing, and provide meaningful examples to readers.
- Evidence: Source material that is used to extend, in purposeful ways, writers' ideas in a text.
- Genre conventions: Formal and informal rules for particular kinds of texts and/or media that guide formatting, organization, and stylistic choices, e.g. lab reports, academic papers, poetry, webpages, or personal essays.
- Sources: Texts (written, oral, behavioral, visual, or other) that writers draw on as they work for a variety of purposes -- to extend, argue with, develop, define, or shape their ideas, for example.

Appendix 9: NACE Career Readiness Student Competency Assessment

NACE Competency Assessment Tool

STUDENT VERSION

OBSERVER VERSION BEGINS ON PAGE 11

NACE Competency Assessment Tool

CAREER & SELF-DEVELOPMENT   STUDENT VERSION

Instructions: This assessment is intended to assess student proficiency in Career & Self-development.
- To use the assessment, review the competency definition and behaviors, then select the score that corresponds to your self-assessment.
- Use the N/A column when you have not yet learned or applied this dimension and/or you do not have enough information to self-assess.

Career & Self-development
Proactively develop oneself and one's career through continual personal and professional learning, awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses, navigation of career opportunities, and networking to build relationships within and outside of one's organization.

Dimension	1 Emerging Knowledge	2 Understanding	3 Early Application	4 Advanced Application	N/A
Awareness of Strengths and Challenges	I can identify strengths and challenges related to career goals.	I understand how strengths and challenges can shape career paths and goals.	I sometimes examine strengths and challenges to find learning experiences needed to move toward career goals.	I consistently examine strengths and challenges to design a plan to find learning experiences needed to move toward career goals.	
Professional Development	I am aware of the need for professional development for achieving career goals.	I understand the importance of professional development for achieving career goals.	I sometimes seek out professional development opportunities for achieving career goals.	I consistently seek out professional development opportunities for achieving career goals.	
Networking	I can identify elements of effective networking, such as connecting with individuals and expecting reasonable outcomes.	I understand how to use networks to create new career pathways.	I sometimes use networks to build new relationships and pathways that align with career goals.	I consistently use networks to build new relationships and pathways that align with career goals.	

Goal Setting for Career & Self-development
Create a SMART goal in one or more of the following areas. SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.
Example: *My next step to get to know my strengths and weaknesses is going to my professor's office hours in the next two weeks to get some feedback.*
- My next step to know my strengths and weaknesses is ...
- My next step for learning related to my major is...
- My next step for making a new network connection and/or creating a meaningful connection in a job area I'm interested in is...

NACE Competency Assessment Tool

COMMUNICATION `STUDENT VERSION`

Instructions: This assessment is intended to assess student proficiency in Communication.
- To use the assessment, review the competency definition and behaviors, then select the score that corresponds to your self-assessment.
- Use the N/A column when you have not yet learned or applied this dimension and/or you do not have enough information to self-assess.

Communication
Clearly and effectively exchange information, ideas, facts, and perspectives with persons inside and outside of an organization.

Dimension	1 Emerging Knowledge	2 Understanding	3 Early Application	4 Advanced Application	N/A
Oral Communication	I recognize the elements of effective oral communication skills, such as asking appropriate questions.	I understand how to use oral communication skills to convey meaning.	I sometimes use effective oral communication skills to convey meaning.	I consistently use effective oral communication skills to convey meaning.	
Written Communication	I recognize the elements of effective written communication skills, such as using clear topic sentences and providing evidence to support claims.	I understand how to use written communication skills to convey meaning.	I sometimes use effective written communication skills to convey meaning.	I consistently use effective written communication skills to convey meaning.	
Non-verbal Communication	I recognize the elements of effective non-verbal communication skills, such as monitoring body language and posture, proximity, gestures, and eye contact.	I understand how to use non-verbal communication skills to convey meaning.	I sometimes use effective non-verbal communication skills to convey meaning.	I consistently use effective non-verbal communication skills to convey meaning.	
Active Listening	I recognize the elements of effective active listening, such as asking clarifying questions and summarizing what was heard.	I understand how to use active listening skills when communicating with others.	I sometimes use active listening skills when communicating with others.	I consistently use active listening skills when communicating with others.	

Goal Setting for Communication
Create a SMART goal in one or more of the following areas. SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.
Example: *I will practice my written communication skills by taking my next assignment to the writing center for review and feedback before handing it in.*
- I will begin to practice my oral communication skills by...
- I will begin to practice my written communication skills by...
- I will begin to practice my non-verbal skills by...
- I will begin to practice my active listening skills by...

NACE Competency Assessment Tool

CRITICAL THINKING `STUDENT VERSION`

Instructions: This assessment is intended to assess student proficiency in Critical Thinking.
- To use the assessment, review the competency definition and behaviors, then select the score that corresponds to your self-assessment.
- Use the N/A column when you have not yet learned or applied this dimension and/or you do not have enough information to self-assess.

Critical Thinking
Identify and respond to needs based upon an understanding of situational context and logical analysis of relevant information.

Dimension	1 Emerging Knowledge	2 Understanding	3 Early Application	4 Advanced Application	N/A
Display Situational Awareness	I recognize the need for situational awareness, such as gathering information, anticipating needs, prioritizing issues, and setting achievable goals.	I understand how to use situational awareness in the workplace.	I sometimes use situational awareness in the workplace.	I consistently use situational awareness in the workplace.	
Gather & Analyze Data	I recognize the role of data gathering and analysis in fully understanding a problem.	I understand how to gather and analyze data to solve a problem.	I sometimes gather and analyze data to solve a problem.	I consistently gather and analyze data to solve a problem after considering the quality of the data.	
Make Effective & Fair Decisions	I recognize the need to objectively assess situations using relevant information from a variety of perspectives to make effective and fair decisions.	I understand the elements of effective decision making and problem-solving, such as problem identification, identifying values, and determining solutions and logistics.	I sometimes demonstrate effective decision making and problem-solving.	I consistently demonstrate effective decision making and problem-solving.	

Goal Setting for Critical Thinking
Create a SMART goal in one or more of the following areas. SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.
Example: *My next step to practice gathering and analyzing data is to read articles from newspapers or online with data in my field in the next few weeks to see how they deal with data.*
- My next step to practice gathering and analyzing data is...
- My next step for practicing situational awareness is...
- My next step for learning to make effective and fair decisions is...

NACE Competency Assessment Tool

EQUITY & INCLUSION `STUDENT VERSION`

Instructions: This assessment is intended to assess student proficiency in Equity & Inclusion.
- To use the assessment, review the competency definition and behaviors, then select the score that corresponds to your self-assessment.
- Use the N/A column when you have not yet learned or applied this dimension and/or you do not have enough information to self-assess.

Equity & Inclusion
Demonstrate the awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills required to equitably engage and include people from different cultures and backgrounds. Engage in anti-oppressive practices that actively challenge the systems, structures, and policies of racism and inequity.

Dimension	1 Emerging Knowledge	2 Understanding	3 Early Application	4 Advanced Application	N/A
Engage Multiple Perspectives	I am aware that different cultures may have different experiences and viewpoints.	I understand the need for getting input from multiple cultures.	I sometimes seek input from multiple cultures.	I consistently seek input from multiple cultures and then integrate the input into future decisions and actions.	
Use Inclusive & Equitable Practices	I am aware that inclusive and equitable practices are used in the workplace.	I understand the importance of inclusive and equitable workplace practices.	I sometimes use inclusive and equitable practices and occasionally work to bring them to the workplace.	I consistently use inclusive and equitable workplace practices and work to bring them to the workplace.	
Advocate	I recognize the need for inclusion, equity, justice, and empowerment for underrepresented groups.	I understand the link between supporting underrepresented groups and achieving inclusion, equity, justice, and empowerment.	I sometimes advocate for underrepresented groups in the workplace.	I consistently advocate for underrepresented groups in the workplace.	

Goal Setting for Equity & Inclusion
Create a SMART goal in one or more of the following areas. SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.
Example: *My next step to include multiple perspectives is to make sure everyone in my group project gets to share their idea for the topic before we start.*
- My next step to include multiple perspectives is…
- My next step to be more inclusive and equitable is…
- My next step to be an advocate for inclusion and equity is…

NACE Competency Assessment Tool

LEADERSHIP `STUDENT VERSION`

Instructions: This assessment is intended to assess student proficiency in Leadership.
- To use the assessment, review the competency definition and behaviors, then select the score that corresponds to your self-assessment.
- Use the N/A column when you have not yet learned or applied this dimension and/or you do not have enough information to self-assess.

Leadership
Recognize and capitalize on personal and team strengths to achieve organizational goals.

Dimension	1 Emerging Knowledge	2 Understanding	3 Early Application	4 Advanced Application	N/A
Inspire, Persuade, & Motivate	I recognize some of the skills and knowledge leaders use in the workplace, such as being a role model, building trust, and tapping into what drives people.	I understand some of the skills and knowledge leaders use in the workplace.	I sometimes practice the skills and knowledge leaders use in the workplace.	I consistently practice the skills and knowledge leaders use in the workplace.	
Engage Various Resources & Seek Feedback	I recognize the value of using a variety of resources (including people) and feedback from others to inform direction.	I understand the importance of using a variety of resources and feedback from others to inform direction.	I sometimes use a variety of resources and feedback from others to inform direction.	I consistently use a variety of resources and feedback from others to inform direction.	
Facilitate Group Dynamics	I recognize the importance of group dynamics in achieving organizational goals by leveraging team member strengths, establishing group norms, and addressing conflicts effectively.	I understand the importance of group dynamics in achieving organizational goals.	I sometimes facilitate group dynamics to achieve organizational goals.	I consistently facilitate group dynamics by putting team members in position to succeed, collectively setting group norms, and resolving conflicts effectively.	

Goal Setting for Leadership
Create a SMART goal in one or more of the following areas. SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.
Example: *My next step to serving as a role model is to find out if I can be a peer tutor or a peer mentor.*
- My next step to practice inspiring, persuading, or motivating others is…
- My next step in using a variety of resources to accomplish what I want is…
- My next step to facilitating group dynamics is…

NACE Competency Assessment Tool

PROFESSIONALISM STUDENT VERSION

Instructions: This assessment is intended to assess student proficiency in Professionalism.
- To use the assessment, review the competency definition and behaviors, then select the score that corresponds to your self-assessment.
- Use the N/A column when you have not yet learned or applied this dimension and/or you do not have enough information to self-assess.

Professionalism
Knowing work environments differ greatly, understand and demonstrate effective work habits, and act in the interest of the larger community and workplace.

Dimension	1 Emerging Knowledge	2 Understanding	3 Early Application	4 Advanced Application	N/A
Act With Integrity	I recognize the need to act with integrity in the workplace by being trustworthy, accountable, and respectful of colleagues and stakeholders.	I understand how to act with integrity in the workplace.	I sometimes act with integrity in the workplace.	I consistently act with integrity in the workplace.	
Demonstrate Dependability	I recognize the need to be a dependable, diligent member of a work environment, including being present, prepared, and showing attention to detail.	I understand how to be a dependable, diligent member of a work environment.	I sometimes act as a dependable, diligent member of a work environment.	I consistently act as a dependable, diligent member of a work environment.	
Achieve Goals	I recognize the need to focus on achieving goals in the workplace.	I understand how to focus on achieving goals in the workplace by prioritizing tasks.	I sometimes achieve goals in the workplace by prioritizing and completing tasks.	I consistently achieve goals in the workplace by prioritizing and completing tasks.	

Goal Setting for Professionalism

Create a SMART goal in one or more of the following areas. SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.
Example: *My next step to demonstrate dependability is to show up to my classes on time, even the early ones.*
- My next step to act with integrity is...
- My next step to demonstrate dependability is...
- My next step to make sure I achieve my goals is...

NACE Competency Assessment Tool

TEAMWORK STUDENT VERSION

Instructions: This assessment is intended to assess student proficiency in Teamwork.
- To use the assessment, review the competency definition and behaviors, then select the score that corresponds to your self-assessment.
- Use the N/A column when you have not yet learned or applied this dimension and/or you do not have enough information to self-assess.

Teamwork
Build and maintain collaborative relationships to work effectively toward common goals, while appreciating diverse viewpoints and shared responsibilities.

Dimension	1 Emerging Knowledge	2 Understanding	3 Early Application	4 Advanced Application	N/A
Build Relationships for Collaboration	I recognize that collaboration and relationship-building are important parts of team-building.	I understand how to build strong, positive work relationships for successful collaboration.	I sometimes build strong, positive work relationships with colleagues for collaboration.	I consistently build strong, positive work relationships with colleagues and supervisors for collaboration.	
Respect Diverse Perspectives	I recognize the need to respect all people in the workplace, including those from diverse backgrounds.	I understand how to respect all people in the workplace, including those from diverse backgrounds.	I sometimes show respect for and include all people in the workplace, including those from diverse backgrounds.	I consistently show respect for and include all people in the workplace, including those from diverse backgrounds.	
Integrate Strengths	I recognize my own and my colleagues' strengths, knowledge, and talents.	I understand how my own and my colleagues' strengths, knowledge, and talents can be integrated into the team to improve team performance.	I sometimes integrate my own and my colleagues' strengths, knowledge, and talents into the team's performance.	I consistently integrate my own and my colleagues' strengths, knowledge, and talents into the team's performance.	

Goal Setting for Teamwork

Create a SMART goal in one or more of the following areas. SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.
Example: *My next step to build better relationships is to reach out to the team leader for my bio project and see if I am up to date on what I need to be doing.*
- My next step for building relationships is...
- My next step for showing respect for diverse perspectives is...
- My next steps for integrating my strengths with others' strengths on a team is...

NACE Competency Assessment Tool

TECHNOLOGY `STUDENT VERSION`

Instructions: This assessment is intended to assess student proficiency in Technology.
- To use the assessment, review the competency definition and behaviors, then select the score that corresponds to your self-assessment.
- Use the N/A column when you have not yet learned or applied this dimension and/or you do not have enough information to self-assess.

Technology
Understand and leverage technologies ethically to enhance efficiencies, complete tasks, and accomplish goals.

Dimension	1 Emerging Knowledge	2 Understanding	3 Early Application	4 Advanced Application	N/A
Leverage Technology	I recognize the role of technology in improving efficiency and productivity.	I understand how to identify and select the appropriate technology for improving efficiency and productivity.	I sometimes use the appropriate technology to improve efficiency and productivity.	I consistently use the appropriate technology to improve efficiency and productivity.	
Adapt to New Technologies	I recognize the importance of adapting to new workplace technologies by exploring, learning, and integrating new technologies into my work.	I understand the knowledge and skills that are needed to adapt to new workplace technologies.	I sometimes develop and use the knowledge and skills that are needed to adapt to new workplace technologies.	I consistently develop and use the knowledge and skills that are needed to adapt to new workplace technologies.	
Use Technology Ethically	I recognize there are ethical issues and questions surrounding the use of technology, such as responsible use of emerging technologies (e.g., AI) and the importance of protecting data and privacy.	I understand how to ensure the ethical use of technology in the workplace.	I sometimes ensure the ethical use of technology in the workplace.	I consistently ensure the ethical use of technology in the workplace, including establishing and following processes for using emerging technologies responsibly and for protecting information.	

Goal Setting for Technology

Create a SMART goal in one or more of the following areas. SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.
Example: *My next step for practicing how to adapt to new technologies is to ask my bio professor about the kinds of tech being used in biology research and labs, and maybe learning more about them this semester.*

- My next step for figuring out how to leverage technology is...
- My next step in practicing how to adapt to new technologies is...
- My next step in practicing ethical use of technology is...

NACE Competency Assessment Tool

INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENTS `STUDENT VERSION`

Assessment Lexicon: The assessments include a rating system with four levels. The language used for these levels was based on concepts of mastery learning and aligned with some concepts of Bloom's Taxonomy. NACE leadership felt that a mastery learning approach was aligned with their commitment to meet students or employees where they are, build upon their strengths, and support the mastery of the behaviors we have identified as critical to each career competency. Here is the lexicon for each level:

1. Emerging Knowledge—The student has an emerging awareness of the behavior, its importance, and related concepts.
2. Understanding—The student expresses or shows an understanding of the behavior and related concepts.
3. Early Application—The student sometimes applies the behavior.
4. Advanced Application—The behavior is consistent and integrated into the student's workplace behaviors.

References
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- Reddy, Y. M., & Andrade, H. (2010). A review of rubric use in higher education, Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 35:4, 435-448.

NACE Competency Assessment Tool

CAREER & SELF-DEVELOPMENT   OBSERVER VERSION

Instructions: This assessment is intended to assess student proficiency in Career & Self-development.

- To use the assessment, review the competency definition and behaviors, then select the score that corresponds to your observations of the student.
- Use the N/O column when the dimension is Not Observed and/or you do not have enough information to assess.
- Consider students with disabilities and neurodiverse needs and provide reasonable accommodations as appropriate.

Career & Self-development
Proactively develop oneself and one's career through continual personal and professional learning, awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses, navigation of career opportunities, and networking to build relationships within and outside of one's organization.

Dimension	1 Emerging Knowledge	2 Understanding	3 Early Application	4 Advanced Application	N/O
Awareness of Strengths and Challenges	Can identify strengths and challenges related to career goals.	Understands how strengths and challenges can shape career paths and goals.	Sometimes examines strengths and challenges to find learning experiences needed to move toward career goals.	Consistently examines strengths and challenges to design a plan to find learning experiences needed to move toward career goals.	
Professional Development	Is aware of the need for professional development for achieving career goals.	Understands the importance of professional development for achieving career goals.	Sometimes seeks out professional development opportunities for achieving career goals.	Consistently seeks out professional development opportunities for achieving career goals.	
Networking	Can identify elements of effective networking, such as connecting with individuals and expecting reasonable outcomes.	Understands how to use networks to create new career pathways.	Sometimes uses networks to build new relationships and pathways that align with career goals.	Consistently uses networks to build new relationships and pathways that align with career goals.	

NACE Competency Assessment Tool

COMMUNICATION `OBSERVER VERSION`

Instructions: This assessment is intended to assess student proficiency in Communication.
- To use the assessment, review the competency definition and behaviors, then select the score that corresponds to your observations of the student.
- Use the N/O column when the dimension is Not Observed and/or you do not have enough information to assess.
- Consider students with disabilities and neurodiverse needs and provide reasonable accommodations as appropriate.

Communication
Clearly and effectively exchange information, ideas, facts, and perspectives with persons inside and outside of an organization.

Dimension	1 Emerging Knowledge	2 Understanding	3 Early Application	4 Advanced Application	N/O
Oral Communication	Recognizes the elements of effective oral communication skills, such as asking appropriate questions.	Understands how to use oral communication skills to convey meaning.	Sometimes uses effective oral communication skills to convey meaning.	Consistently uses effective oral communication skills to convey meaning.	
Written Communication	Recognizes the elements of effective written communication skills, such as using clear topic sentences and providing evidence to support claims.	Understands how to use written communication skills to convey meaning.	Sometimes uses effective written communication skills to convey meaning.	Consistently uses effective written communication skills to convey meaning.	
Non-verbal Communication	Recognizes the elements of effective non-verbal communication skills, such as monitoring body language and posture, proximity, gestures, and eye contact.	Understands how to use non-verbal communication skills to convey meaning.	Sometimes uses effective non-verbal communication skills to convey meaning.	Consistently uses effective non-verbal communication skills to convey meaning.	
Active Listening	Recognizes the elements of effective active listening, such as asking clarifying questions and summarizing what was heard.	Understands how to use active listening skills when communicating with others.	Sometimes uses active listening skills when communicating with others.	Consistently uses active listening skills when communicating with others.	

NACE Competency Assessment Tool

CRITICAL THINKING `OBSERVER VERSION`

Instructions: This assessment is intended to assess student proficiency in Critical Thinking.
- To use the assessment, review the competency definition and behaviors, then select the score that corresponds to your observations of the student.
- Use the N/O column when the dimension is Not Observed and/or you do not have enough information to assess.
- Consider students with disabilities and neurodiverse needs and provide reasonable accommodations as appropriate.

Critical Thinking
Identify and respond to needs based upon an understanding of situational context and logical analysis of relevant information.

Dimension	1 Emerging Knowledge	2 Understanding	3 Early Application	4 Advanced Application	N/O
Display Situational Awareness	Recognizes the need for situational awareness, such as gathering information, anticipating needs, prioritizing issues, and setting achievable goals.	Understands how to use situational awareness in the workplace.	Sometimes uses situational awareness in the workplace.	Consistently uses situational awareness in the workplace.	
Gather & Analyze Data	Recognizes the role of data gathering and analysis in fully understanding a problem.	Understands how to gather and analyze data to solve a problem.	Sometimes gathers and analyzes data to solve a problem.	Consistently gathers and analyzes data to solve a problem after considering the quality of the data.	
Make Effective & Fair Decisions	Recognizes the need to objectively assess situations using relevant information from a variety of perspectives to make effective and fair decisions.	Understands the elements of effective decision-making and problem-solving, such as problem identification, identifying values, and determining solutions and logistics.	Sometimes demonstrates effective decision-making and problem-solving.	Consistently demonstrates effective decision-making and problem-solving.	

NACE Competency Assessment Tool

EQUITY & INCLUSION `OBSERVER VERSION`

Instructions: This assessment is intended to assess student proficiency in Equity & Inclusion.
- To use the assessment, review the competency definition and behaviors, then select the score that corresponds to your observations of the student.
- Use the N/O column when the dimension is Not Observed and/or you do not have enough information to assess.
- Consider students with disabilities and neurodiverse needs and provide reasonable accommodations as appropriate.

Equity & Inclusion
Demonstrate the awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills required to equitably engage and include people from different cultures and backgrounds. Engage in anti-oppressive practices that actively challenge the systems, structures, and policies of racism and inequity.

Dimension	1 Emerging Knowledge	2 Understanding	3 Early Application	4 Advanced Application	N/O
Engage Multiple Perspectives	Is aware that different cultures may have different experiences and viewpoints.	Understands the need for getting input from multiple cultures.	Sometimes seeks input from multiple cultures.	Consistently seeks input from multiple cultures and then integrates the input into future decisions and actions.	
Use Inclusive & Equitable Practices	Is aware that inclusive and equitable practices are used in the workplace.	Understands the importance of inclusive and equitable workplace practices.	Sometimes uses inclusive and equitable practices and occasionally works to bring them to the workplace.	Consistently uses inclusive and equitable workplace practices and works to bring them to the workplace.	
Advocate	Recognizes the need for inclusion, equity, justice, and empowerment for underrepresented groups.	Understands the link between supporting underrepresented groups and achieving inclusion, equity, justice, and empowerment.	Sometimes advocates for underrepresented groups in the workplace.	Consistently advocates for underrepresented groups in the workplace.	

NACE Competency Assessment Tool

LEADERSHIP `OBSERVER VERSION`

Instructions: This assessment is intended to assess student proficiency in Leadership.
- To use the assessment, review the competency definition and behaviors, then select the score that corresponds to your observations of the student.
- Use the N/O column when the dimension is Not Observed and/or you do not have enough information to assess.
- Consider students with disabilities and neurodiverse needs and provide reasonable accommodations as appropriate.

Leadership
Recognize and capitalize on personal and team strengths to achieve organizational goals.

Dimension	1 Emerging Knowledge	2 Understanding	3 Early Application	4 Advanced Application	N/O
Inspire, Persuade, & Motivate	Recognizes some of the skills and knowledge leaders use in the workplace, such as being a role model, building trust, and tapping into what drives people.	Understands some of the skills and knowledge leaders use in the workplace.	Sometimes practices the skills and knowledge leaders use in the workplace.	Consistently practices the skills and knowledge leaders use in the workplace.	
Engage Various Resources & Seek Feedback	Recognizes the value of using a variety of resources (including people) and feedback from others to inform direction.	Understands the importance of using a variety of resources and feedback from others to inform direction.	Sometimes uses a variety of resources and feedback from others to inform direction.	Consistently uses a variety of resources and feedback from others to inform direction.	
Facilitate Group Dynamics	Recognizes the importance of group dynamics in achieving organizational goals by leveraging team member strengths, establishing group norms, and addressing conflicts effectively.	Understands the importance of group dynamics in achieving organizational goals.	Sometimes facilitates group dynamics to achieve organizational goals.	Consistently facilitates group dynamics by putting team members in position to succeed, collectively setting group norms, and resolving conflicts effectively.	

NACE Competency Assessment Tool

PROFESSIONALISM   OBSERVER VERSION

Instructions: This assessment is intended to assess student proficiency in Professionalism.
- To use the assessment, review the competency definition and behaviors, then select the score that corresponds to your observations of the student.
- Use the N/O column when the dimension is Not Observed and/or you do not have enough information to assess.
- Consider students with disabilities and neurodiverse needs and provide reasonable accommodations as appropriate.

Professionalism
Knowing work environments differ greatly, understand and demonstrate effective work habits, and act in the interest of the larger community and workplace.

Dimension	1 Emerging Knowledge	2 Understanding	3 Early Application	4 Advanced Application	N/O
Act With Integrity	Recognizes the need to act with integrity in the workplace by being trustworthy, accountable, and respectful of colleagues and stakeholders.	Understands how to act with integrity in the workplace.	Sometimes acts with integrity in the workplace.	Consistently acts with integrity in the workplace.	
Demonstrate Dependability	Recognizes the need to be a dependable, diligent member of a work environment, including being present, prepared, and showing attention to detail.	Understands how to be a dependable, diligent member of a work environment.	Sometimes acts as a dependable, diligent member of a work environment.	Consistently acts as a dependable, diligent member of a work environment.	
Achieve Goals	Recognizes the need to focus on achieving goals in the workplace.	Understands how to focus on achieving goals in the workplace by prioritizing tasks.	Sometimes achieves goals in the workplace by prioritizing and completing tasks.	Consistently achieves goals in the workplace by prioritizing and completing tasks.	

NACE Competency Assessment Tool

TEAMWORK   OBSERVER VERSION

Instructions: This assessment is intended to assess student proficiency in Teamwork.
- To use the assessment, review the competency definition and behaviors, then select the score that corresponds to your observations of the student.
- Use the N/O column when the dimension is Not Observed and/or you do not have enough information to assess.
- Consider students with disabilities and neurodiverse needs and provide reasonable accommodations as appropriate.

Teamwork
Build and maintain collaborative relationships to work effectively toward common goals, while appreciating diverse viewpoints and shared responsibilities.

Dimension	1 Emerging Knowledge	2 Understanding	3 Early Application	4 Advanced Application	N/O
Build Relationships for Collaboration	Recognizes that collaboration and relationship-building are important parts of team-building.	Understands how to build strong, positive work relationships for successful collaboration.	Sometimes builds strong, positive work relationships with colleagues for collaboration.	Consistently builds strong, positive work relationships with colleagues and supervisors for collaboration.	
Respect Diverse Perspectives	Recognizes the need to respect all people in the workplace, including those from diverse backgrounds.	Understands how to respect all people in the workplace, including those from diverse backgrounds.	Sometimes shows respect for and includes all people in the workplace, including those from diverse backgrounds.	Consistently shows respect for and includes all people in the workplace, including those from diverse backgrounds.	
Integrate Strengths	Recognizes their own and their colleagues' strengths, knowledge, and talents.	Understands how their own and their colleagues' strengths, knowledge, and talents can be integrated into the team to improve team performance.	Sometimes integrates their own and their colleagues' strengths, knowledge, and talents into the team's performance.	Consistently integrates their own and their colleagues' strengths, knowledge, and talents into the team's performance.	

NACE Competency Assessment Tool

TECHNOLOGY

Instructions: This assessment is intended to assess student proficiency in Technology.
- To use the assessment, review the competency definition and behaviors, then select the score that corresponds to your observations of the student.
- Use the N/O column when the dimension is Not Observed and/or you do not have enough information to assess.
- Consider students with disabilities and neurodiverse needs and provide reasonable accommodations as appropriate.

Technology
Understand and leverage technologies ethically to enhance efficiencies, complete tasks, and accomplish goals.

Dimension	1 Emerging Knowledge	2 Understanding	3 Early Application	4 Advanced Application	N/O
Leverage Technology	Recognizes the role of technology in improving efficiency and productivity.	Understands how to identify and select the appropriate technology for improving efficiency and productivity.	Sometimes uses the appropriate technology to improve efficiency and productivity.	Consistently uses the appropriate technology to improve efficiency and productivity.	
Adapt to New Technologies	Recognizes the importance of adapting to new workplace technologies by exploring, learning, and integrating new technologies into their work.	Understands the knowledge and skills that are needed to adapt to new workplace technologies.	Sometimes develops and uses the knowledge and skills that are needed to adapt to new workplace technologies.	Consistently develops and uses the knowledge and skills that are needed to adapt to new workplace technologies.	
Use Technology Ethically	Recognizes there are ethical issues and questions surrounding the use of technology, such as responsible use of emerging technologies (e.g., AI), and the importance of protecting data and privacy.	Understands how to ensure the ethical use of technology in the workplace.	Sometimes ensures the ethical use of technology in the workplace.	Consistently ensures the ethical use of technology in the work-place, including establishing and following processes for using emerging technologies responsibly and for protecting information.	

NACE Competency Assessment Tool

INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENTS

Assessment Lexicon: The assessments include a rating system with four levels. The language used for these levels was based on concepts of mastery learning and aligned with some concepts of Bloom's Taxonomy. NACE leadership felt that a mastery learning approach was aligned with their commitment to meet students or employees where they are, build upon their strengths, and support the mastery of the behaviors we have identified as critical to each career competency. Here is the lexicon for each level:

1. Emerging Knowledge—The student has an emerging awareness of the behavior, its importance, and related concepts.
2. Understanding—The student expresses or shows an understanding of the behavior and related concepts.
3. Early Application—The student sometimes applies the behavior.
4. Advanced Application—The behavior is consistent and integrated into the student's workplace behaviors.

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- Degree Qualifications Profile—https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/dqp.pdf
- Education Design Lab Microcredentialing—https://eddesignlab.org/microcredentialing/microcredentials/
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- Levine, E. & Patrick, S. (2019). What Is Competency-Based Education: An Updated Definition. Competency Works: An Initiative of the Aurora Institute.
- Reddy, Y. M., & Andrade, H. (2010). A review of rubric use in higher education, Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 35:4, 435-448.

Appendix 10: KGP Reflection Scoring Rubric

Criterion	1 – Limited	2 – Developing	3 – Proficient	4 – Advanced
Recognition of Skill Development	Does not recognize or express any awareness of skill development	Vaguely references growth in a KGP skill, but without clear connection to course experiences	Acknowledges development in at least one KGP skill as a result of the course	Clearly and confidently acknowledges personal development in at least one KGP skill (critical thinking and/or communication) as a result of the course
Connection to Course Experience	Offers no example or provides off-topic or irrelevant examples	Offers general or unclear examples with limited connection to the skill	Provides at least one relevant example from the course that supports the reflection	Provides thoughtful and specific examples from the course that illustrate how the skill was developed
Metacognitive Insight	Demonstrates no metacognitive insight or personal reflection	Offers limited or superficial insight into development or application of the skill	Shows some reflection on how the skill developed and/or how it may apply in future contexts	Demonstrates deep reflection on how the skill developed, why it matters, and how it may apply in future contexts

Appendix 11: TILT Alignment Scoring Tool

Component	2 – Fully Aligned	1 – Partially Aligned	0 – Not Aligned
Purpose	The assignment clearly and explicitly states its learning purpose, including which skills or knowledge students will gain and how it relates to course goals or broader competencies (e.g., KGP skills).	The assignment includes a vague or implicit statement of purpose or rationale, but it may not directly connect to learning goals.	No clear explanation is provided for why students are completing the assignment.
Task	The assignment provides clear, step-by-step instructions that explain exactly what students need to do, including specific tasks, expectations, and submission details.	Instructions are present but may be unclear, incomplete, or assume too much prior knowledge. Some ambiguity may exist about what is expected.	Instructions are overly brief, vague, or missing key components, leaving students uncertain about what to do.
Criteria for Success	The assignment provides detailed evaluation criteria (e.g., rubric, examples, or grading explanations) that help students understand how their work will be judged.	Criteria for evaluation are present but lack detail, clarity, or accessibility. Rubrics or grading guidance may be generic or inconsistently applied.	No criteria or explanation is provided about how the work will be evaluated.

Scoring: **5-6 points** = *fully aligned*; **3-4 points** = *partially aligned*; **0-2 points** = *limited alignment*

The TILT assignment alignment rubric is informed by:

Winkelmes, M. A. (2023). Introduction to transparency in learning and teaching. *Perspectives In Learning*, *20*(2), 4-12.