

# Baker College, MI

## Project: Achieving Career Excellence

### Declaration

<b>Q: Briefly describe the project in less than 100 words. Be sure to identify the key organizational areas (departments, programs, divisions, units, etc.) and key organizational processes that this action project will affect, change, and/or improve.</b>
<b>A:</b> Traditionally, Baker College has offered a career success experience at the end of a student's program. Resume writing, interview skills and professionalism have been introduced and incorporated through a "Professional Career Strategies" course that has been taken at the end of the student's academic experience. Through the work of an ad-hoc committee, it was recognized that these foundational employment skills should instead to be introduced earlier and more often. This project provides an opportunity for the implementation of a more holistic and longitudinal approach to the development and integration of employment skills across the student life cycle.

<b>Q: Describe your institution's reasons for initiating this action project now and how long it should take to complete it. Why are this project and its goals high among your institution's current priorities? Also, explain how this project relates to any strategic initiatives or challenges described in the institution's recent or soon-to-be submitted Systems Portfolio.</b>
<b>A:</b> The Professional Career Strategies course was initially examined by an ad-hoc committee consisting of both Career Service and Academic personnel. This cross-functional committee worked for over two years to assess the employment skills content needed by all students, irrespective of major. The group was tasked with the goal of "reimagining" and designing a professional career strategies experience focused on employment and workforce skills. As a result of this effort, the committee developed a framework for embedding career-ready skills early and often within each program in the form of learning outcomes, assignments and rubrics.  The current project will focus on the implementation strategies for embedding, assessing, and ensuring the development of consistent foundational employment skills across the curriculum of all majors.  Because the College is in the midst of a strategic initiative to convert from a quarter-based to a semester-based calendar effective fall 2017 and all curriculum is being revised, the timing is ideal to begin this implementation stage.  It is anticipated that the project will take 12 months to complete.

**Q: List the project goals, milestones, and deliverables along with corresponding metrics, due dates, and other measures for assessing the progress toward each goal. Be sure to include when you anticipate submitting the project for formal reviews.**

**A:** The project goals for Achieve Career Excellence (ACE) are a series of well-defined, self-paced assignments and activities, structured with a defined timeline, which prepare students to seek employment or promotion (SEE Attachment Achieve Career Excellence Summary document). The newly designed learning outcomes will be fully implemented effective Fall 2017, replacing the current WRK 291B Professional Career Strategies 1-credit hour course, which will be offered last in Summer 2017.

ACE is integrated throughout a student's academic experience, beginning with the student's initial term at Baker College and ending with a completed employment portfolio approved in the capstone experience. The monitoring of student work will be achieved through the electronic database, *Handshake*. The expectation is that each student throughout his or her academic career at Baker College will complete all assignments through one of three avenues: self-paced individual assignments, program/general education courses incorporating the assignments, or program/ general education courses offering a similar assignment. The student will compile the assignments into an employment portfolio, with final assessment in the capstone work experience course.

An initial outreach communication will be sent to introduce students to ACE, with midpoint and near graduation reminders sent through Handshake, to ensure that students are progressing through the assignments. The final assessment of the assignments will occur in the capstone experience, with the awarding of a certificate of completion and points for the employment portfolio. No credit hours are associated with ACE beyond the credits received in the capstone course or in the program/general education courses.

The formal evaluation progress (with milestones) will be reviewed in the following time table:

**August 15, 2016 - September 30, 2016 --** The original project team members will present the framework to all Deans of the Colleges/Schools to include the requirements of the ACE project within each program major.

**October 1, 2016 -- Quarterly Report to Project Sponsor(s) --** Status report from each Dean of the College/School due regarding the template to be utilized to embed the assignment and activities into the program map.

**October 1, 2016 - January 31, 2017 --** Project team will meet with each program group and the Dean to outline the monitoring checkpoints for each ACE approved assignment within a student's program major.

**February 1, 2017 -- Quarterly Report to Project Sponsor(s) --** Status report from each Dean of the College/School due regarding the template to be utilized to embed the assignment and activities into the program map.

**February 1, 2017 - March 31, 2017 --** Project team will meet with each program group and the Dean to outline the monitoring checkpoints for each ACE approved assignment within a student's program major.

**April 1, 2017 -- Quarterly Report to Project Sponsor(s) --** Status report from each Dean of the College/School due regarding the template to be utilized to embed the assignment and activities into the program map.

**April 1, 2017 - June 30, 2017 –** Project team will meet with each program group and the Dean to outline the monitoring checkpoints for each ACE approved assignment within a student's program major.

**July 1, 2017 -- Quarterly Report to Project Sponsor(s) – All programs will have a template to be utilized to embed the assignment and activities into the program map for final review of the project team.**

**July 1, 2017 – September 29, 2017 –** Project team will review all mapping submissions with each College/School of Dean. Project will be submitted for review to the HLC regarding the status of the templates built for each program that outline the deliverables in the semester conversion of the curriculum and program outcomes to ensure quality assurance.

**December 31, 2017 --** Feedback received from the HLC and Final Report Summary to Project Sponsor(s) and Project Closure Report submitted to Higher Learning Commission.

**Q: Describe how various members of the learning community will participate in this action project. Show the breadth of involvement by individuals and groups over the project's duration.**

**A:** The project team for this project will be cross-functional by design. It will include representation from all academic program areas of the institution including Instructional Designers and Career Services personnel. The project team will meet with each Dean of the College/School and key program officials to ensure clear guidelines and expectations regarding the FIVE Career Strategies outlined by the original ad-hoc committee (SEE Attachment Learning Outcomes for ACE Projects).

All programs and students will be impacted by the implementation of the ACE framework. Key performance metrics identified for the projects will demonstrate that the template created for each program identifies where and how each career-ready assignment and student learning outcome is embedded within the content of the coursework for each program area.

**Q: Describe how the institution will monitor project progress/success during, and at the completion of this project. Be sure to specifically state the measures that will be evaluated and when.**

**A:** Oversight for the strategic plan including all AQIP projects is the responsibility of the Institutional Strategy Council. Additionally, quarterly project updates will be provided to the Academic Leadership team consisting of Deans, Directors / VPs of Academic Affairs, and Directors / VPs of Student Affairs.

The projects consists of the following goals to be measured at the end of 12 months:

- (1) Career-ready Assignments embedded throughout the curriculum content of each program are identified.
- (2) Templates for each program area that highlight ‘where and how’ the student learning outcomes are being embedded into curriculum content are outlined.
- (3) Process for all program areas to monitoring student progress regarding completion of the career-ready assignments, tracked through *Handshake*, is outlined.
- (4) Electronic employment portfolio for each student prior to graduation during the capstone experience (program completion with the career preparation assignments) is created.
- (5) Transparency of the framework, reporting processes, and annual assessment dates are identified by Academic Leadership.

**Q: Describe the challenges that may be encountered in successfully completing the project or for institutionalizing the learning from the project’s goals.**

**A:** A significant challenge may arise in helping all program officials transition the career-ready skills and assignments under their leadership to monitor the progress for each student within the program. The program officials **MUST** ensure that each faculty teaching each course within the program understands the expectations, is knowledgeable of the Handshake system, and ensures students are compliant in completing the assignments. This will be a significant cultural change for the institution.

There may be some challenge to the assumption that the current state for the Professional Career Strategies course (owned by Career Services Personnel) will continue. Additionally, as students re-enter into the College after completion of an associate degree and further their education with the institution, some of the assignments may need to be modified and monitored. It should be noted, however, that because the College is changing to a semester-based calendar, all curriculum and outcomes will be revised and edited for all students who re-enter.

**Q: Provide any additional information that the institution wishes reviewers to understand regarding this Action Project.**

**A:** The project will be successful to the extent that the College has a transparent, consistent communication strategy for all stakeholders to understand the ACE project and educate current and future faculty on the importance of the career-ready foundational skills needed for today's graduates. Taking the approach of embedding these foundational skills throughout the academic journey of each student (instead of at the end of the student's program) will allow for a continuum and reinforcement of career-ready skills early and often.