



Exploring Models for Employer Partnership

Highlights from EAB's Research Library

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- Catalog of Partnership Options
 - Model 1: Tuition Reimbursement
 - Model 2: Customized Contract Training
 - Model 3: Soft Skills Assessment Center
 - Model 4: College as Contractor
 - Model 5: Course-Based Job Screen

Employer Partnership Options

Fundamental and Innovative Ideas to Work with Regional Organizations

[Highlighted](#) options appear as featured models on pages 3 through 7.

Targeted Employer Outreach

- Networking events headlined by faculty with strong industry reputations
- Recruitment fairs in employer cafeteria
- Try-before-you-buy free content in employer LMS

Content Experts for Hire

- Adult and professional education instructors teach training developed and hosted by employer
- [One-on-one coaching led by adult and professional education instructors](#)
- [Faculty consulting engagements identify opportunities for training](#)

Education-to-Work Hiring Pipelines

- Students guaranteed job offer upon meeting conditional requirements
- [Coursework paired with employer-designed assessment; top scorers receive interview](#)
- [Students work part-time while in program, with eventual full-time opportunities](#)
- Virtual internships allow students to develop networks in other locations

Industry Aggregators

- Regional small business consortia
- Industry-specific training institutes housed within the adult and professional education unit
- New programs designed by industry consortia

Mix-and-Match Customization

- Face-to-face instruction for senior leaders, reinforced with online coursework for their teams
- Off-the-shelf content delivered onsite
- Standardized curriculum includes customizable modules for different industries
- Dedicated section for employer cohort within a larger program

Co-Developed Programming

- Custom program serves as pilot for potentially widespread offering
- Custom-designed certificate articulates to public-facing degree program
- Courses co-designed to integrate internal training content with university curriculum
- Administration of existing corporate training course by adult and professional education faculty or instructors
- Employer-specific co-designed case studies incorporated into standardized curriculum

Preferred Partner Membership Programs

- [Tuition discounts](#)
- Access to campus facilities for existing internal training
- Access to employer-specific facility or business incubator

Delay Tuition Payment to Eliminate Upfront Costs

Upfront Tuition Costs Contribute to Low Tuition Reimbursement Use

Tuition reimbursement provides employers a cost-effective means for workers to advance their skills. Moreover, it allows employers to recruit and retain high-potential workers. Some employers use education benefits to attract job candidates who value further learning. Others offer tuition coverage to encourage workers who would otherwise leave the firm for education to stay employed while they complete their credential.

Employees consistently underutilize tuition reimbursement funds, however; approximately five percent of employees use tuition reimbursement year after year. Finances still inhibit enrollment. Anxiety about returning to school and difficult administrative processes also limit enrollment.

Reimbursement Alone Not Enough

Adults' Most Common Barriers to Enrollment



Finances: Prospective students choose not to enroll because they cannot afford upfront tuition payment



School Reentry Anxiety: Adults with limited educational experience fear entering campus or returning to the classroom



Complex Enrollment Process: Professional obligations prevent adults from visiting campus during workday to complete various steps required for admission

Eliminating Out-of-Pocket Costs



1) Promissory Note: Student submits signed note to college guaranteeing payment for registered courses



2) Bill Deferral: Upon receipt of note, college extends student's payment deadline to 30 days after term ends



3) Course Completion: Student receives reimbursement from employer after passing courses with satisfactory grade



4) Tuition Payment: After receiving reimbursement, student pays college for courses taken

To eliminate the upfront costs of using tuition reimbursement, Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) allows students to defer payment until after the term ends. A qualifying student must submit a promissory note to the college before classes start. Her employer must sign the note to indicate that the company's tuition reimbursement policy covers the applicable courses, and the student must sign the note to confirm that she assumes full responsibility for payment.

Once staff in DMACC's business office receive the promissory note, they extend the student's deadline to pay tuition until 30 days after classes end. This window allows the student to submit her transcript to her employer and receive reimbursement. Afterward, she can pay the college without incurring any financial burden.

DMACC staff advertise the deferred payment plan through onsite education fairs and the college website. Since introducing the plan, the number of students who use tuition reimbursement has grown substantially. In a single semester, 170 employer-sponsored students enrolled at the college under the deferred payment plan.

Employee-Centered Services Increase Engagement

UD Coaching Service Differentiates Business School Training

Most institutions attempt to differentiate their services in a competitive market by aiming to keep cost as low as possible. Counterintuitively, some institutions are demonstrating their unique value by offering more services and charging accordingly. In the process, they highlight how valuable a university can be in developing a highly productive workforce.

Administrators at the University of Delaware have actively promoted coaching as a mid-level benefit, rather than an executive perk. Any corporate training proposal at the Lerner College of Business comes embedded with two to three hours of personalized coaching per employee. While employers balk at the initial cost, they typically negotiate coaching down to fewer hours, rather than remove it altogether.

Even with a single hour of coaching, Delaware's partner employers see huge value. Employees consistently rank their coaching hours as the most beneficial element of the training process. Employers themselves are so satisfied with the impact of coaching that 70 percent of repeat training requests include more coaching hours in the subsequent contract.

For the institution, coaching provides a valued service to employers that provides personalization not common in the training market. Companies increasingly seek out flexible and inexpensive online training solutions, but employees find it much harder to access personalized guidance as part of their career development. Employees who can access coaching often report high satisfaction with the experience. They value an external opinion on their job prospects at vital points in their careers.

Lerner College supports coaching services with only a single certified coach among full-time staff.

Coaching Shifts from Executive Perk to Mid-Level Benefit



- Provide leadership development and practical skill-building to mid-career professionals
- Typically cost upwards of \$200/hour for individual engagements
- Coaches are ICF-certified¹ (or similar)

- 1 College staff meet with prospect to understand training needs
- 2 Develop proposal with embedded coaching hours
- 3 Prospect typically accepts limited scope of embedded coaching

- ✓ Purchasers see **higher value of embedded coaching** than line-item cost
- ✓ Employees rank coaching as **key element** of training engagements



1) International Coach Federation Certification. <http://www.coachfederation.org/program/landing.cfm?ItemNumber=2151&navItemNumber=3354>

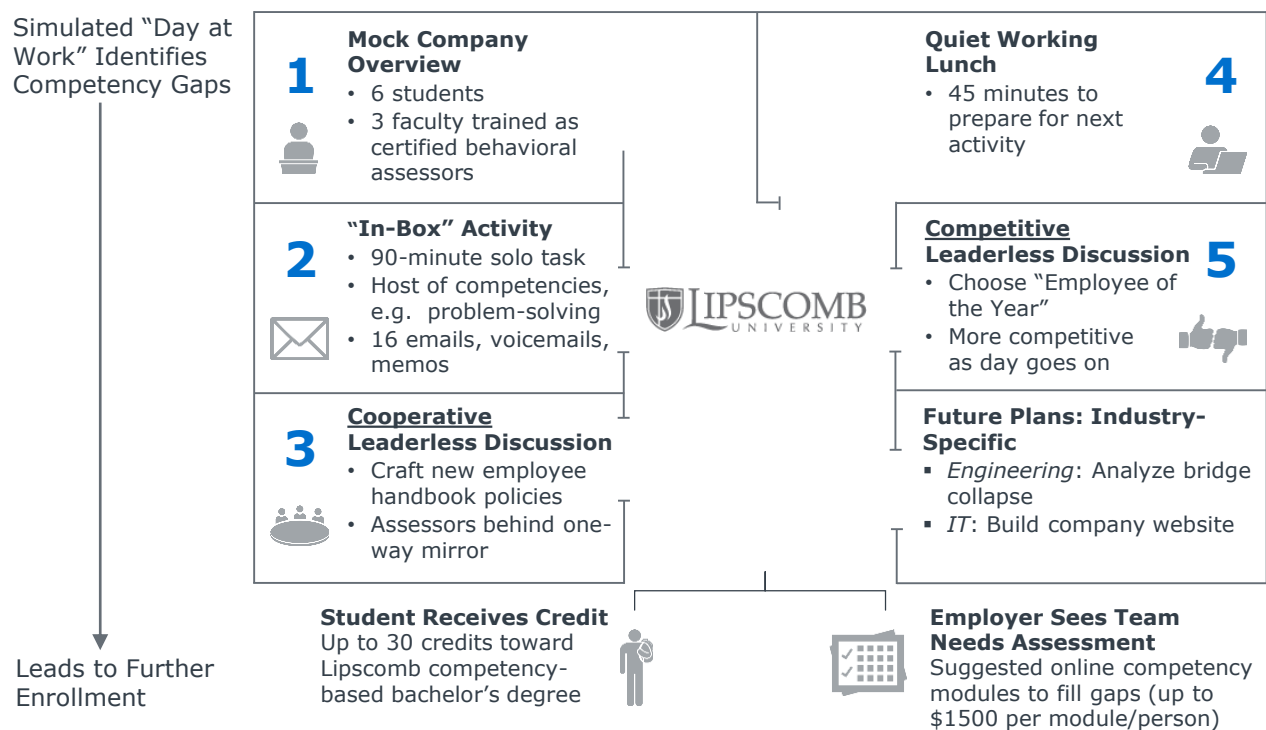
Simulated Day at Work Identifies Training Needs

Lipscomb University's CORE¹ Soft Skills Assessment Center

The soft skills assessment center at Lipscomb University solves employers' common inability to name training needs: students participate in a simulated workday, while three certified behavioral assessors observe their performance. Assessors use the external Polaris Assessment System to evaluate students' competencies in employer-friendly language.

After the simulation, staff create a teamwide needs assessment that identifies performance gaps and prescribes appropriate Lipscomb University competency-based education modules. Personalized results are only released to employers with employee consent.

A Day at the Soft Skills Assessment Center



1) Customized, Outcome-based, Relevant Evaluation

Source: EAB interviews and analysis. [Lipscomb University Academic & Employment Partners webpage.](#)

University Creates Pipeline of High-Skill Workers

Wichita State University's Solution for Regional Entry-Level Needs

Professional and adult education units traditionally seek to meet employer needs by translating academic program content into skill-building programs for local professionals. Because they focus on opportunities to offer training programs to corporate and nonprofit partners, many units highlight strong academic foundations and renowned subject matter experts as key value propositions for prospective clients.

However, hiring skilled employees ready to add value on day one represents a greater challenge to many employers than training existing workers, with recent figures indicating that hiring costs employers over three times as much as training. While offering training for existing employees represents a valuable service, providing access to top emerging student talent through contract-based projects either embedded in curricula or completed on partner premises represents an incredible value add for employer partners.

Deploying COE students to help employers complete one-off projects or solve organizational challenges represents an opportunity to develop high-impact partnerships that provide value to both units and partnering organizations. Students currently enrolled in high-demand programs represent a largely untapped resource that can be valuable for employers eager to identify emerging talent and access inexpensive specialized labor for urgent projects.

Employer-university partnerships can also help employers identify and retain long-term talent for eventual management positions. Wichita State University (WSU) partners with several regionally prominent aeronautics firms to provide students for contract projects. WSU sources and trains the students, provides faculty oversight, and retains 25 percent of the contract revenue, while students earn a \$25 hourly wage and opportunities for full-time employment.

University-Based Contracting Keeps Graduates Local

1 Aerospace Firms Facing Workforce Challenges

2 VPR Creates Innovative Program

3 Industry, and Graduates, Stay Local



- Entry-level engineers lack needed professional skills
- Offshoring attractive, but then no management pipeline



- Wichita State contracts students for engineering projects at \$25/hr
- Hires, fires, and trains students
- Students earn \$10-15K/year
- Firms have no obligation to develop students

Results of Beechcraft Partnership



35%

Student workers employed at Beechcraft after graduation



83%

Participants employed in Wichita after graduation

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Employers Hire Based on Course Performance

Industrial Readiness Training Program Achieves High Job Placement

Southwest Tennessee Community College collaborated with local manufacturing companies on a customized, five-week training to prepare students for the workforce. These organizations had struggled to fill their job openings; poor resumes, weak interview communication, or failure to show up on time kept most candidates from employment. By working with employers, Southwest Tennessee Community College enabled the firms to screen candidates based on course performance instead of resumes and interview skills, which was more likely to reflect their ability to thrive in the job.

As a result of the employer involvement, every student who meets course performance standards moves to the front of the line for a job interview.

Southwest Tennessee Community College's Industrial Readiness Training Program

SOUTHWEST Industrial Readiness TENNESSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE Training Program



Employers **customize a 5-week training** according to technical and soft skills demanded



Students prepared to **adhere to workplace standards**, including attendance and dress code



College **shares student records**, including assessment results and attendance reports, with employer



Employers **offer job interviews** to students who complete training according to their specifications

Strong Program Outcomes Inspire Statewide Replication

1,040

Students who have completed program, 2012-2016

\$1M

Total training revenue from enrolled students, paid in part by workforce investment board

80%

Approximate job placement rate for program completers



Plans to replicate program across Tennessee and expand into retail and logistics

The program prepares students for entry-level employment by closely emulating a real-work environment. Students must follow a dress code and explain any tardiness or absences, all while learning professional and technical skills customized to the needs of the manufacturing firms.

Instead of reviewing students' resumes, employers review their performance in the training program itself. Employers have access to students' attendance and behavioral records, as well as their test scores. Southwest Tennessee Community College even invites employers into the classroom to observe student performance first hand.

From its launch in 2012 to our analysis in 2016, more than 1,000 students had completed the Industrial Readiness Training Program, generating over \$1 million in additional revenue for the college. A job placement rate of nearly 80 percent for program completers reflects the close alignment of the program's curriculum with local employer skill needs. Southwest Tennessee Community College has also experienced long-term benefits from the program, as participants are more likely to return to the college for future education and training needs.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.