



**Task Force: Student Affairs Task Force  
Career Readiness Action Team  
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## Summary of Recommendations

According to What is College for? The public purpose of higher education co-author, William Sullivan, "Higher Education...has the responsibility to see that its vocational programs do justice to the large task of preparing students to shape lives of meaning and purpose. Within a dynamic and unstable world, the academy needs to provide a professional preparation that is broad as well as deep" (2012). Dr. Phil Gardner, who works at Michigan State University's Collegiate Employment Research Institute, advocates for universities to educate 'T-Shaped Professionals' - individuals who leave the university system having had an opportunity to develop a "deep knowledge in a discipline and a system, forming the vertical line of the 'T', but also communication skills, curiosity, empathy, and other soft skills that allow them to relate and to interact with workers from other systems and disciplines" (Carlson, 2017), which form the vertical cross of the 'T'.

For years, Student Affairs professionals have contributed to their institution's overall value by nudging, challenging, and supporting students to develop broad skills that complement the skills they develop through their academic course of study. Student Affairs professionals educate students to: think critically about their own growth, strengthen their interactions with others, connect their classroom knowledge outside of the classroom, and engage in healthy behaviors—all broad skills that enable students to transcend one or more systems and disciplines.

The framework of Career Readiness, as defined by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, outlines the broad skills that employers seek in qualified candidates. This Career Readiness framework can serve as a map for us to think about how we motivate UNC students to develop and grow. Career Readiness, when centered in a Division of Student Affairs at UNC, serves as a framework to unify and streamline units/programs, resources, and student learning opportunities. When Career Readiness is centralized within UNC, we have the opportunity to create "T-Shaped Professionals" by connecting all student learning opportunities not captured in students' academic transcripts, and provide our students with a unique learning experience that can aid in their ability to live lives of meaning and purpose, secure employment, and become socially mobile.

We recommend using digital badging as a way to enable students to identify and articulate the broad skills they have gained during their UNC experience. "Modern digital badges are virtual markers of achievements. A digital badge is a validated indicator of accomplishment, skill, quality, or interest" (McDaniel & Fanfarelli, 2016).

### **We recommend:**

1. Mapping learning opportunities into a Career Readiness framework.
  - See example from [Binghamton University Passport to Career Success](https://www.binghamton.edu/ccpd/students/passport/index.html) (Retrieved from <https://www.binghamton.edu/ccpd/students/passport/index.html>).

2. Creating combined Academic and Student Affairs Career Readiness timeline that enable undergraduate and graduate students to understand how to persist to graduation as well as gain career readiness competencies throughout their UNC experience.
3. Acquiring an electronic badging system should be considered as the mechanism to engage and motivate students toward gaining career readiness competencies. When the UNC campus community comes together to implement a campus-wide electronic badging system, it has the capability for us to: attract new learners, motivate and incentivize current students toward desired learning outcomes, and track and assess student learning.
  - See Digital Badging System [Credly](https://info.credly.com/) (Retrieved from <https://info.credly.com/>).
  - See examples from the [University of Maine, Engaged Black Bear Digital Badging Initiative](#) and the [Colorado Community College System Digital Badge Initiative](#) (Retrieved from <https://umaine.edu/engagedblackbear/learning-pathways/> and <https://internal.cccs.edu/academic-affairs/digital-badges/>).

"First year students can feel motivated to achieve digital badges that recognize and verify their learning within the higher education institution, as well as in informal settings and from previous experiences. The signaling of learners' achievements and the capturing of learning paths can assist first-year students in the transition to higher education by providing structure, as well as targeting short-term and long-term goals" (Pechenkina, Laurence, Oates, Eldridge & Hunter, 2017).

### **Collective Impact Statement**

The Active Learning Subcommittee (Academic Portfolio Task Force), in collaboration with the following subcommittees; Career Readiness Strategies (Student Affairs Task Force), and First Year Experiences (Student Success Task Force) acknowledges the significant interrelations between the proposals expressed herein and those of the other groups. In particular, collectively we manifest our support of the centrality of Active Learning as a tangible and recognizable approach to recruit, retain, and support student success on campus and career readiness for post-graduation. Furthermore, we collectively endorse the need to research and adopt a digital credentialing software, as a vital resource for students and our campus. While outlined in Active Learning Subcommittee report, the benefits and applicability of this tool extend into many other areas on campus.

### **Detailed Discussion of Recommendations**

1. **In what ways do these recommendations align with the guiding principles for all task force committees?**

1) Claim intentionally as our mission the education of first generation and other underrepresented groups. Initiatives should be structured and delivered to promote the academic progression and success of these students. Students who don't belong to these populations will also benefit.

- Students from first generation, low income, and/or underrepresented backgrounds may not have the knowledge and social capital to navigate their college experience and understand the benefits of having out of classroom experiences. Explicitly showing students the pathways to gain Career Readiness competencies throughout their time at UNC will increase the likelihood that they will have gained valuable experiences to help them be successful in life and work.
- By illuminating pathways to gain Career Readiness competencies, students will have opportunities to learn new skills while also learning more about themselves, their strengths and values that will help them make informed career-related decisions.

2. Commit to ensuring that every student, graduate and undergraduate, is career-ready by the time they graduate. Programs and services must be able to demonstrate in concrete ways how they prepare students for professional lives after graduation.

- We propose using a curriculum-like mapping process to identify existing Career Readiness learning opportunities across campus programs, events, and activities. With this information, we can identify any gaps or overlaps with learning opportunities and then work to ensure every student can achieve Career Readiness prior to graduation.
- Developing a campus-wide badging system will enable every undergraduate and graduate student to articulate the Career Readiness competencies they gained during their UNC experience.

3. Use our institutional learning outcomes as a framework for developing and delivering programs and services. Each task force should be able to show how its recommendations and strategies align with and support some or all of the institutional learning outcomes.

- UNC's Institutional Learning Outcomes support Career Readiness as defined by the National Association of Colleges and Employers.

5. Commit to transparency in reporting progress and outcomes related to the implementation of committee recommendations. A clear strategy for collecting, analyzing, reporting and using performance data should be embedded in the plans that emerge from the task force recommendations.

- A digital badging system would enable us to collect, analyze, report student learning data.

**2. What resources would be saved or required to implement and sustain these recommendations? Remember that resources include human, financial, technology, and facilities.**

Resources to be saved:

- Eliminate duplicative programming across Student Affairs (time, money, technology)

- Save time and money when we share resources

Potential New Revenue:

- Badging system could attract new learners
- Badging system could retain students and increase graduation rates
- Badges could be used by Extended Campus to package for-cost professional development badges
- Could partner with both on-campus and off-campus employers to create exclusive badge content
- An opportunity for donors to give a gift to pay for some of the badging system
- An opportunity to purchase a badging system with Aims Community College and create specific badges that students could earn at Aims and apply to UNC

Technology:

- Badging system could work with Canvas

\*Although we know a badging system would be a cost to UNC, we believe there is an opportunity for a badging system to help us generate revenue by attracting new learners and encouraging current students to remain at UNC. Although it may be possible to create a badging system through a paper process or Canvas shell, this would limit the value and portability of digital badges.

**3. How would implementation of these recommendations improve existing programs and services?**

- Increase student retention, graduation rates, and positively impact a student's first destination post-graduation.
- Provide clarity for students navigating the college experience.
- Reduction of inconsistency (messaging and resources to students).
- Streamline programs and services by filling in gaps and decreasing duplication.
- Create a seamless student experience by connecting Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Student Success.

**4. What services or programs could be phased out because they would no longer be needed or because implementation of the recommendations would represent a more effective and efficient use of university resources?**

By implementing a curriculum-like mapping process to identify Career Readiness learning opportunities across campus, we can identify any gaps or overlaps and phase out or eliminate programs and services that are no longer needed.

*Current data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) coordinated by the National Center for Education Statistics indicates that, in comparison with our peer institutions, UNC spends nearly three times as much per student FTE in the Student Support functional expense category. It is possible that UNC is not necessarily spending more, but is counting more services than our peer institutions. Identifying*

*specifically how and what services UNC tallies to identify our Student Support expense may identify more effective and efficient usage of university resources.*

*Specifically, the Committee believes identifying the Student Service expenses may shed light on specific areas where colleges, specific academic programs, and co-curricular areas are duplicating the following services:*

- *Career-readiness activities*
- *Advising*
- *Business Manager Functions*
- *Student Support Staff*

**5. Who would be primarily responsible for implementing these recommendations and have those individuals/units been consulted?**

This initiative would be campus wide with implementation efforts coming from a committee of individuals within Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Student Success (individuals have not been selected or consulted directly; however, we have been communicating with representative individuals on the Active Learning Group). The committee would be responsible for designing and implementing a process for creating, issuing, and promoting the Career Readiness Digital Badging System. This group would also be responsible for reviewing and approving Career Readiness activities and identify gaps or duplications across campus to be reviewed. In addition to creating criteria, training, and resources for those issuing badges and would be responsible for assessment implementation and program reviews.

**6. Action Plan**

**Action Plan (add lines as needed)**

<p><b>Recommendation 1 and 2:</b> Mapping learning opportunities into a Career Readiness framework.</p> <p>Creating combined Academic and Student Affairs Career Readiness timeline that enable undergraduate and graduate students to understand how to persist to graduation as well as gain career readiness competencies throughout their UNC experience.</p>		
<p><b>Performance Metric(s):</b> N/A</p>		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Short or Long Term</b>
Assemble a committee with members from across campus to design and implement the combined academic and career readiness timelines.	AVPs	Short Term
Brand and market the timelines to the campus community.	Career Readiness Committee and University Relations	Short Term
Provide online resources for the campus community and additional constituents (community, alumni, employers, parents and family, donors).	Career Readiness Committee and University Relations	Long Term
Assessment and Program Review	Career Readiness Committee and Institutional Research	Long Term
Report progress (yearly report)	Career Readiness Committee	Long Term
<p><b>Recommendation 3:</b> Acquiring an electronic badging system should be considered as the mechanism to engage and motivate students toward gaining career readiness competencies. When the UNC campus community comes together to implement a campus-wide electronic badging system, it has the capability for us to: attract new learners, motivate and incentivize current students toward desired learning outcomes, and track and assess student learning.</p>		
<p><b>Performance Metric(s):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student participation and level of engagement (number of Badges earned).</li> <li>• Total number of Graduates with Career Readiness Badges who have obtained Employment during your designated window.</li> <li>• Retention rates of students who participated in the Career Readiness Badge Program versus those who did not.</li> <li>• Evidence of student learning as submitted to earn a digital badge.</li> </ul>		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Short or Long Term</b>
Assemble a committee with members from across campus to design and implement the campus wide digital badging system.	AVPs	Short Term

Gather information and select a digital badging system.	Career Readiness Committee	Short Term
Design career readiness badges and badge levels with information and input from stakeholders on and off campus.	Career Readiness Committee	Short Term
Design and implement a process for creating, issuing, and promoting the Career Readiness Digital Badging System.	Career Readiness Committee	Long term
Market the Career Readiness Badging System to the campus community. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify ways to educate students about the benefits of Digital Badging and how to obtain Career Readiness Badges.</li> </ul>	Career Readiness Committee and University Relations	Long term
Assessment and Program Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We recommend applying a cycle of assessment to the badging process.</li> </ul>		Long Term