



OACC | Ohio TechNet

# Building Industry Partnerships

---

Experiential Learning Webinar Series  
2026



OhioTechNet

---

# Let's Hear From You

---

## Why do Industry Partnerships Matter?



- Community Colleges are uniquely positioned to serve as the bridge between education and employment
- Strong industry partnerships ensure that colleges are preparing students with the skills, credentials, and experiences employers need while supporting regional growth.

### **Benefits to Students**

- Access to relevant, career focused education aligned with workforce needs.
- Increased opportunities for internships, apprenticeships, clinicals, and other work-based learning.
- Exposure to industry professionals, mentors, and networking opportunities.
- Improved job placement, career advancement, and earning potential.

### **Benefits to Institutions**

- Programs remain current, relevant, and responsive to labor market demands.
- Stronger enrollment and student retention through clear career pathways.
- Increased opportunities for grants, equipment donations, sponsorships, and collaborative projects.
- Enhanced reputation as a trusted workforce and economic development partner.

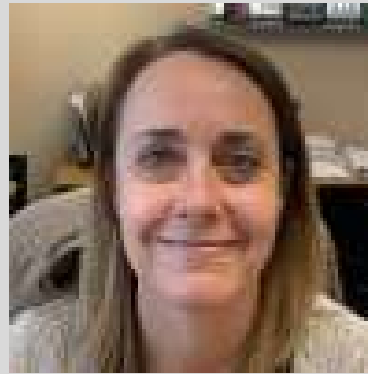
# Session **O v e r v i e w**

---

- **Understanding** the employer perspective
- **Developing** partnership strategy
- How to **Engage** employers
- **Building** meaningful relationships
- **Partnership Management** – multiple departments  
engaging with employers
- **Partnership Models That Work**



# Today's **PRESENTERS**

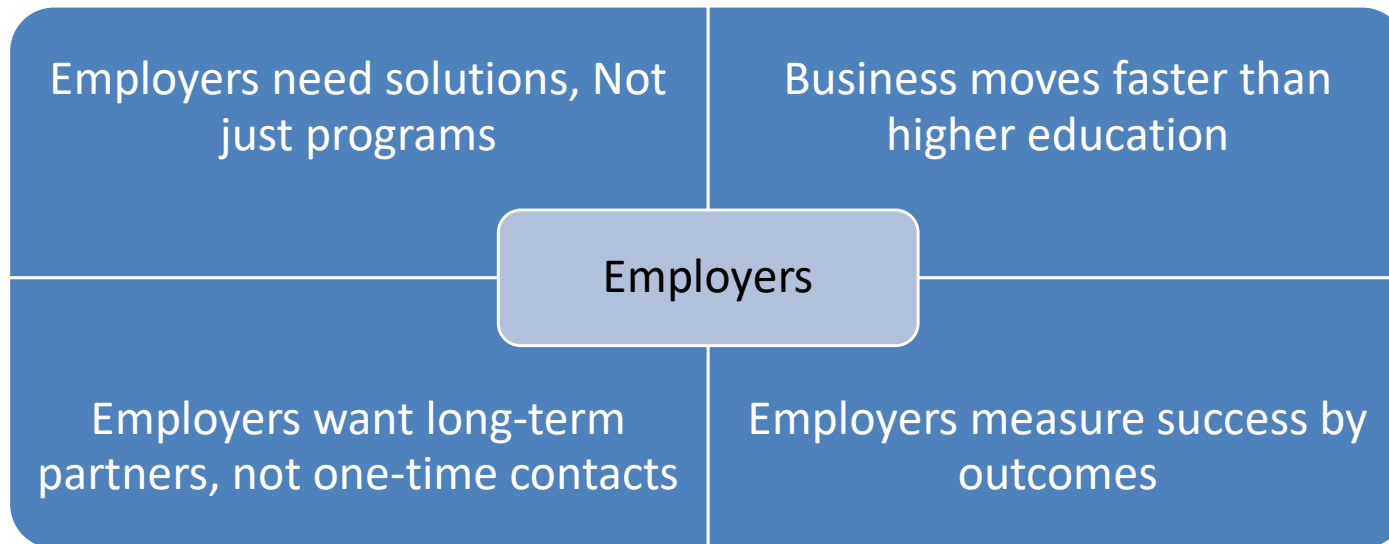


**Kelle Pack**  
Owens Community College



**Kelly Harper**  
Cincinnati State Technical &  
Community College

# Understanding the Employer Perspective



Takeaway: Show how the partnership delivers measurable value for both the employer and students.

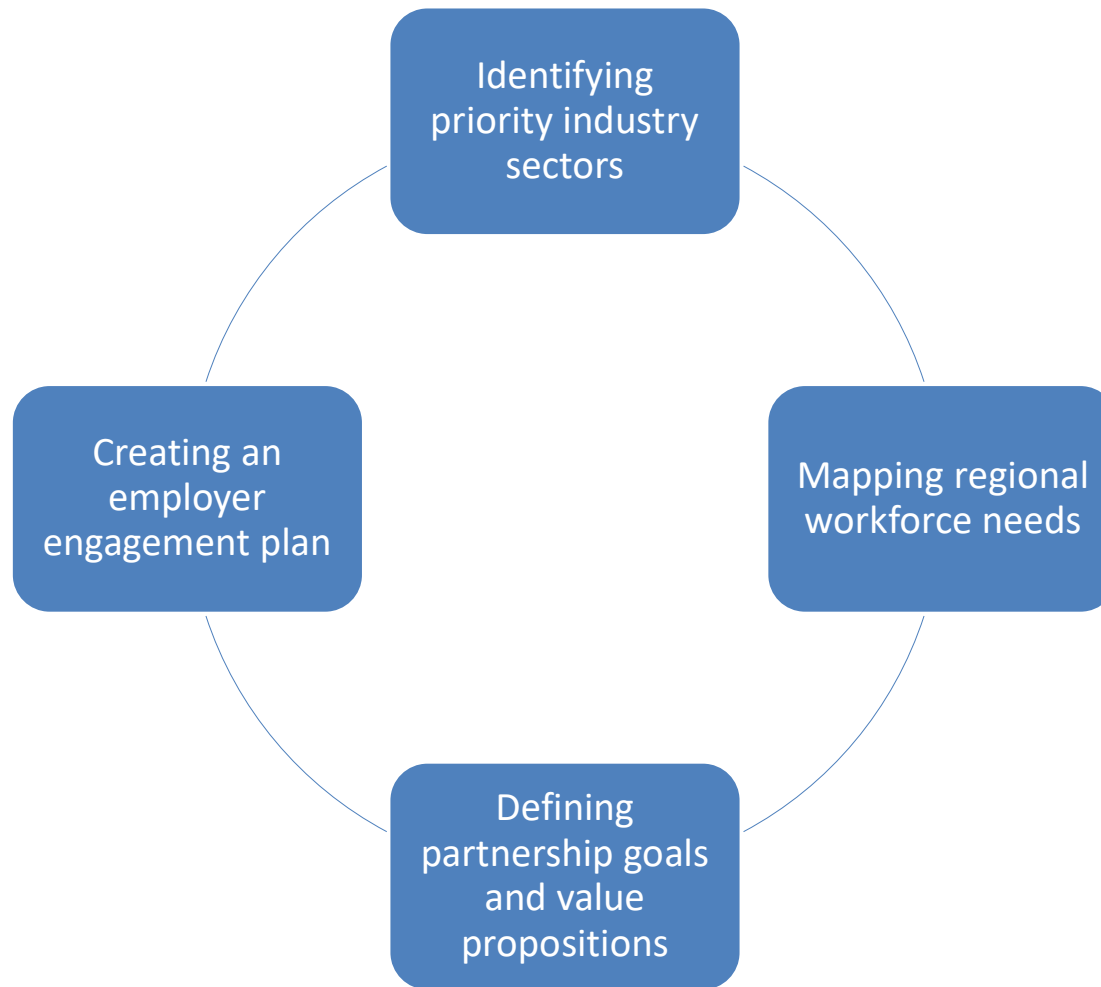
# Let's Hear From You

---



**Tell us about your experience with employers?**

# Developing Partnership Strategy



# How to engage employers

- 1** Develop Long-Term employer Partnerships
- 2** Co-Design Experiential Learning Experiences
- 3** Offer a variety of Experiential Learning Approaches
- 4** Reduce Barriers for Employer Participation
- 5** Prepare Students and Support Supervisors
- 6** Evaluate, Recognize, and Support Partnerships

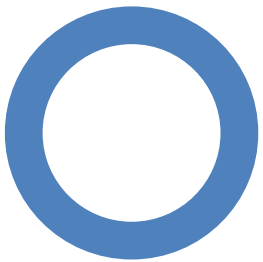
# Building Meaningful Relationships

Lead with listening

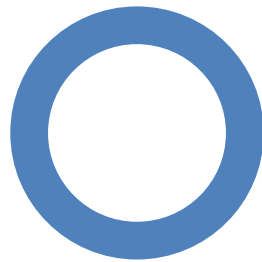
- Start by understanding the employer's business, workforce challenges, and future talents needs
- Ask questions before proposing solutions.
- Focus on solving business problems rather than promoting college programs.

Deliver Value

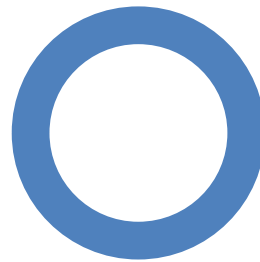
- Provide solutions



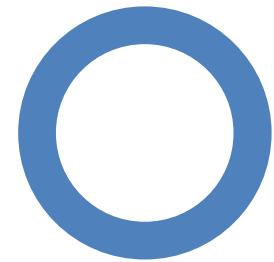
Listen



Respond



Partner



Deliver

# Strategies for Mutual Beneficial Relationships

- Position experiential learning as a way to address talent shortages, succession planning, and employee development.
- View the relationship as a comprehensive partnership rather than a single internship opportunity.
- Begin with a manageable opportunity, such as a job shadow, a class project, or one intern. Use early successes to expand into additional experiential learning opportunities.
- Maintain contact throughout the year, not just when seeking placements.
- Address concerns quickly and provide resources for workplace supervisors.
- Incorporate feedback into program improvements and share the changes made as a result.

# Let's Hear From You

---



# Partnership Management

- Position experiential learning as a way to address talent shortages, succession planning, and employee development.
- View the relationship as a comprehensive partnership rather than a single internship opportunity.
- Begin with a manageable opportunity, such as a job shadow, a class project, or one intern. Use early successes to expand into additional experiential learning opportunities.
- Maintain contact throughout the year, not just when seeking placements.
- Address concerns quickly and provide resources for workplace supervisors.
- Incorporate feedback into program improvements and share the changes made as a result.



# **Partnership Models That Work**





# **Owens Community College Approach to Developing Meaningful Industry Partnerships**

Kelle Pack

Vice President, Institutional Advancement and  
Executive Director, Owens Foundation



# Owens Community College

## MISSION

Owens Community College is the conduit to changing lives for the better in northwest Ohio. Through affordable, accessible, high quality education and training, and connecting with business and industry through relevant programs, we create pathways to a better quality of life and progress for the Region.

# Owens Community College

## VISION

Owens Community College will be the connector between people, industry and dynamic growth in the Region. By creating solutions to the education, training and workforce needs of the Region, we will be an indispensable partner and a first choice to students, employers and the northwest Ohio community.

# Owens Community College

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

### EXPANDING OUR PARTNERSHIPS

Nurture and cultivate robust partnerships serving as the catalyst for growth and success, connecting Northwest Ohio and beyond.

How?

# Owens Community College

## Tactics:

- Create interface for partnerships that creates preference for Owens as the first and best choice
- Predict and address local employer needs with timely, relevant programs
- Expand and deepen collaboration with primary & secondary schools and Career Technology Centers
- Actively pursue partnerships that generate revenue as a pathway for more students to learn, train & grow

# Owens Community College

We recognized the need from a College-wide perspective and knew that we needed a way for College-wide visibility and communication.

We decided that we needed to both define  
partnerships AND  
find a way to organize and track them.

Big “P” partnerships and little “p” partnerships.

# Owens Community College

## Big “P” Partnerships

“Overarching relationship strategy that helps us to lead regional civic and workforce ecosystems integrating education, industry, government and community partners (AACCC)”

These Partnerships result in outcomes to mutually benefit our students, faculty, staff, community, industry and region.

# Owens Community College

## To support Big “P” Partnerships

- Specific conversations at leadership level to discuss and strategize
- Tell the story of successful Partnerships internally and externally
- Beginning Fall 2026, Partnerships is a standing agenda item for Administrative Council – group charged with operationalizing College priorities. Goal is to both better define Partnerships and encourage sharing of information

# Owens Community College

## Little “p” Partnerships

Data that is being tracked pertaining to external relationships allowing for visibility and communication across the College.

We needed to find a tool to do this.

WorkforceConnect

# Owens Community College

Little “p” partnerships include:

- President’s contacts
- Foundation/event sponsors
- Earn and Learn companies
- Career & Transfer Services contacts
- Advisory Board members
- High schools and transfer partners
- Internship & clinical partners

# Owens Community College

Roll out and adoption of partnership tracking is a work in progress.

Broke it into 2 steps –

1. Initial loading of organizations, contacts and relationships
2. Ongoing tracking of activity, keeping information up to date, etc.

# Owens Community College

Started with President's Contacts and Foundation contacts

- Helped to get buy in from across College since it was coming from the top – build trust
- Used as pioneer to test and develop processes and standard operating procedures

# Owens Community College

Fall 2026 – creation of an Administrative Support Council who will be responsible for the care and feeding of Workforce Connect tool.

- Partnerships benefit everyone at Owens and we have a shared responsibility for their success.



# **Owens Community College**

Examples of Partnership Success?



# Cincinnati State Technical & Community College

Cincinnati State was founded on the principle that education occurs best when combined with **classroom instruction** and **cooperative work experience**. This career-focused, hands-on learning model remains at the core of the institution today

**Mandatory Co-op:** It was the first community college in Ohio to make **cooperative education** a mandatory requirement for graduation. (1969)

# **Cincinnati State Cross College View of Employer Relations Decentralized Model**

Co-op Program

Clinicals &  
Practicums

Advisory  
Boards

Data Collection  
via Evaluation

Career Center

Workforce  
Development  
Center

Institutional  
Advancement

Administration

# Cincinnati State

| Area                      | Primary Employer Connection                                           |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Career Center             | Recruiting, job fairs, internships, career coaching                   |
| Cooperative Education     | Paid co-op experiences, employer partnerships, curriculum integration |
| Clinical Programs         | Clinical placements, preceptors, healthcare partnerships              |
| Workforce Development     | Customized training, incumbent worker training, upskilling            |
| Institutional Advancement | Sponsorships, philanthropy, advisory support, community investment    |
| Academic Programs         | Advisory committees, curriculum feedback, guest speakers              |

# Cincinnati State's Career Center

## Timeline

### **Cincinnati State Receives Ohio Means Co-op & Internship Grant**

- Personnel to oversee Co-op leadership
- Employer Relations (part-time)
- Converted a database started internally to Symplicity – bringing Employer Co-op data from the 90s into the system.
- Converted Employer & Student Evaluations into an electronic format.
- Personnel from our Institutional Research office assisted with the transition from one system to another.

**2014**

### **Launched a Career Center to complement the work from OMIC and expand.**

- Personnel > embedded a Data Manager in Institutional Research to compile data from our Co-op surveys

**2017-18**

### **HLC moves away from the AQIP model for accreditation.**

- Co-op data becomes a valuable piece to program self-studies.

**2019-20**

# Cincinnati State's Career Center Employer Relations Manager

## Timeline

|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>2021</b>                | Student Services Specialist more devoted to Employer Relations role in a full-time capacity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>2025</b>                | Hired a permanent Employer Relations Manager                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Focus of their work</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Serve as a liaison between the College &amp; local businesses</li><li>• Manage job fairs</li><li>• Manage information tables &amp; sessions</li><li>• Onboarding employers into our database &amp; recruitment processes</li><li>• Liaison between employers and our academic programs &amp; workforce development initiatives</li></ul> |

# Employer Relations Framework

| Area                         | Primary Purpose                                                                                     | Typical Employer Contacts                                                          | Primary Outcomes                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Career Center</b>         | Recruit talent and support employer hiring needs                                                    | HR recruiters, talent acquisition, campus recruiters                               | Job postings, career fairs, internships, recruiting events, on-campus interviews, employer branding                     |
| <b>Cooperative Education</b> | Develop long-term educational partnerships that integrate paid work experiences into the curriculum | Hiring managers, supervisors, HR, executives                                       | Co-op positions, site development, learning objectives, student supervision, employer evaluations, faculty partnerships |
| <b>Clinical Education</b>    | Secure and maintain required clinical learning experiences for students in licensed health programs | Clinical coordinators, education departments, nurse managers, department directors | Clinical placements, affiliation agreements, compliance, preceptor relationships, required experiential learning        |

# Co-op Coordinators

| Co-op Coordinator       | Role                                                         |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Full-time Faculty       | Teach within their academic discipline                       |
| Program Liaison         | Support a designated portfolio of academic programs          |
| Employer Partner        | Develop and maintain industry relationships                  |
| Educational Facilitator | Align work experiences with curriculum and learning outcomes |
| Student Mentor          | Guide students through their Co-op experience                |

# Co-op Data – CState CareerLink Powered by Symplicity

| Function                | How Symplicity Supports Experiential Learning                                              |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Student Placements      | Tracks co-op, internships, and other work-based learning experiences                       |
| Employer Relationships  | Maintains a comprehensive history of employer engagement across multiple years             |
| Learning Assessment     | Collects employer and student evaluations to measure learning outcomes                     |
| Relationship Management | Tracks employer contacts, recruiting activities, job fairs, and campus engagement          |
| Data & Reporting        | Produces reports for accreditation, assessment, workforce outcomes, and strategic planning |

# Site Visits

## **Site Visits: Where Partnerships Become Stronger**

A site visit is more than checking on a student—it's an opportunity to strengthen relationships, enhance learning, and better understand employer needs.

### **During A Site Visit, Co-op Coordinators:**

- Meet with the Student
- Meet with the Supervisor
- Learn more about the organization
- It's a strategic reconnection

# Bring the Workplace to the Classroom

- Site Visits
- Employer Evaluations
- Advisory Boards

*Employer feedback doesn't sit in a report—it becomes part of an ongoing conversation about teaching, learning, and program improvement.*

# Let's Hear From You

---



1. How familiar are you with experiential learning?
2. How would you describe the role of experiential learning in your institution today?
3. What has been your experience with experiential learning?

# Student Success **IMPACT**

---

- Improve Student Outcomes across Academic, Personal, and Career Dimensions
- Increase Academic Engagement and Achievement
- Strengthens Career Readiness and Employability
- Improves Retention and Persistence to Completion
- Strengthens Personal and Social Development
- Enhances Post-Graduation Outcomes
- Builds Stronger Connections between Education and Industry



# Let's Hear From You

---



1. Which experiential learning models are currently used at your institution?
2. What has worked well?
3. What successes or wins have emerged from experiential learning?

# Contact us



Courtney Tenhover



[ctenhover@lorainccc.edu](mailto:ctenhover@lorainccc.edu)



[www.ohiotechnet.org](http://www.ohiotechnet.org)



Crystal Jones



[cjones@ohiocc.org](mailto:cjones@ohiocc.org)



[www.ohiocommunitycolleges.org](http://www.ohiocommunitycolleges.org)



OACC | Ohio TechNet  
**THANK YOU**

