



Editorial Introduction: 2023 Pedagogicon Proceedings

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2023 Pedagogicon Proceedings

Editorial Introduction

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Eastern Kentucky University hosted its tenth annual Pedagogicon, May 18-19, 2023. The theme, “Workforce & Employability Skills: Teaching & Learning for Future Careers,” sparked presentations and conversations focused on how educators can help students build essential skills in and out of the classroom that will transfer to the workforce. These “skills allow students to thrive in their respective fields, filling local, national, and global employment needs and contributing to a healthy economy” (website). The theme also echoed initiatives by multiple national organizations, such as the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), the Quality Assurance (QA) Commons, and the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), as well as a statewide initiative developed by the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education.

Day 1 of Pedagogicon started with a pre-conference session featuring the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education’s (CPE) Graduate Profile Academy (GPA). The morning featured talks from Dr. Aaron Thompson, CPE President, and Dr. Janna Vice, (EKU Provost Emerita and Senior Fellow for Policy Development and

Director, KY Graduate Profile Academy, CPE). In addition, there were two morning panels, one consisting of Kentucky employers and a second consisting of recent graduates of Kentucky state universities. Each panel discussed their perspectives on specific skills students need to succeed in a rapidly changing workforce.

Employer panelists discussed:

- Common mistakes or misconceptions that new graduates have about the workforce
- Graduate preparation for the workforce
- Challenges new hires typically face when it comes to employability skills
- How to assess employability skills of new hires

- What specific skills or knowledge new graduates may be lacking when they enter the workforce
- skills do graduates typically perform well on in your field
- How they see the preparedness of new graduates changing in the future and what implications this has for the workforce

Similarly, the alumni panel discussed the role of skills in their own experiences transitioning to the workforce, including:

- How they navigated the transition from the academic setting to the workforce and the challenges they faced
- Common mistakes or misconceptions that they had about the workforce and how they addressed them
- How they continued to develop their skills and knowledge since graduating and what strategies they found to be most effective

Throughout the afternoon, representatives from each of the state universities and community and technical colleges were able to showcase how they were implementing the GPA into their curricula, primarily through course assignments and syllabi. Campus presentations on skills implementation highlighted several transparent (Winkelmes, 2023) and transferable opportunities for moving forward:

- Designing transdisciplinary collaborations
- Partnering with career services and academic affairs
- Revising general education and first-year experience
- Expanding internships and co-ops

Building on the success of the conference and recent research on essential skill integration at the curricular level (Carpenter, Dvorak, & Wentzel, 2023; Carpenter, Dvorak, & Ortquist-Ahrens, 2023; Carpenter, Dvorak, & Concannon, 2023), and to sustain relationships and collaboration across the state, we have designed and implemented the Essential Skills Institute, focused on preparing higher education institutions with the approaches and strategies needed to implement essential employability skills at three levels: assignment, course, and program. Three Essential Skills Institutes have been facilitated across two-year colleges.

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