

Successful Onboarding of Postsecondary CTE Instructors

Advance CTE Postsecondary State CTE Leaders Fellowship Real-World Project Whitepaper

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### Abstract

Professionals teaching in the field of Career Technical Education (CTE) have the challenging task of educating students in both academic and occupational subjects. Instructors must bring together academic study with practical experience to better equip students for success in the workplace. Teachers in the field of CTE benefit greatly from and welcome individualized training programs. Instructors in CTE programs work with a distinct population of students who benefit most from a hands-on approach and are more likely to succeed if they are properly motivated. This project sought to develop a basic introductory training for postsecondary institutions to use when recruiting and onboarding new, diverse CTE instructors with little to no classroom teaching experience.

## Successful Onboarding of Postsecondary CTE Instructors

### **Introduction**

There are several challenges to overcome the need to increase the pipeline of CTE instructors at both the secondary and postsecondary levels. Instructors with CTE backgrounds are difficult to hire because they have such specialized skills and training and because the wages may be high in the industry compared to what they may earn as instructors. Once hired, getting these professionals prepared for class is even more difficult. As an educator, the author of this paper and creator of this onboarding/training either has been “thrown” into the classroom with little or no training or regrettably has done this to new instructors as program director, department chair, or dean. Oftentimes, new instructors are hired immediately before the course begins.

### **Project Purpose**

Community and technical colleges, like any other educational institution, benefit from having a leader who can recognize the difference between technical and adaptive challenges and between technical and adaptive solutions (Bragg & McCambly, 2018). Focusing upon the postsecondary level, this project sought to develop basic teaching delivery skills for individuals entering the classroom directly from their respective industries. The overarching objective of this real-world project was to create a 5-day, 20-hour inclusive training and onboarding that could be adopted and implemented at any postsecondary institution with little effort or editing. The training will include PowerPoint presentations; interactive face-to-face, in-person, in-class assignments; brief homework assignments; end-of-module assessments to check for understanding; and an end-of-training presentation to be submitted by the attendee/new instructor.

## **Background**

### **Education System**

Instructors in CTE must engage with a special student population that has specific learning needs while providing concurrent academic and occupational instruction that integrates theoretical and practical knowledge. These instructors possess the practical expertise and in-depth subject knowledge necessary for the vocational classroom, but they lack a crucial skill set: a fundamental understanding of pedagogical theory. Although it is obvious that CTE institutions must offer initial and continuous training opportunities for teachers, deciding which kind of instruction is most suitable can be challenging for these institutions (Cannon et al., 2011). Finding training programs that meet the unique requirements of CTE teachers is difficult because little research has been done to evaluate teacher in-service needs in this field.

### **Importance of Work to Marginalized Student Population's Success**

When working with a certain kind of student, such as marginalized populations, adult learners who prefer hands-on activities and need the right kind of motivation, and students who may have been previously unsuccessful at other higher education institutions, CTE educators must possess pedagogical subject knowledge that is suited to their particular needs.

Due to the numerous disparities in postsecondary CTE education, the efforts are crucial. CTE programs have become more and more well liked among all age groups throughout time. The number of skilled workers entering the workforce must increase. CTE educators with the necessary expertise are required to achieve this. In addition, it should be possible for students to recognize themselves in the teachers who guide them. Creating a week-long, paid new instructor onboarding that any institution can use may help with the recruitment and retention of new,

competent instructors who have no prior teaching experience as institutions work to reduce educational barriers for marginalized populations.

### **Change in Policy/Procedure**

In a unique situation, CTE educators must deliver both academic and occupational teaching while combining knowledge that is both theoretical and practical and preparing students for the workplace. A factor contributing to the CTE teacher-training conundrum is the prevalence of conventional programs for teacher education because there is no official teacher training for this skillset. Because they assume prior knowledge or expertise in the education profession, standard teacher preparation programs are ineffective for CTE instructors. Upon hire, conventional onboarding and training programs often do not work with CTE educators. CTE instructors are willing to take part in training programs that cater to their particular needs.

CTE teachers need to know how to develop classes that go above standard pedagogy/andragogy and content understanding by incorporating problem- and project-based learning, coordinating industry-specific experiences for students (including community speakers, field trips, and internships), developing creative techniques to engage students, and expanding their own expertise to be current in their particular sector. CTE educators, in addition to imparting theoretical information, have the obligation to learn about the realities of the corporate world, the industrial sector, and the community at large to better adapt their courses to the needs of today's employers.

### **Qualitative and Tangible Measures of Success**

This project has not been implemented at the time of the writing of this whitepaper. With the backing of the institution, the project creator is prepared to offer a summer bootcamp incorporating this training along with institutional onboarding to properly prepare new CTE

instructors. It will involve new hires, as well as a set number of individuals interested in teaching in the future, based upon institutional capacity and course availability.

### **Method of Evaluation**

#### **Potential Barriers and Obstacles**

Obstacles to implementation would include funding and instructor interest.

#### **Equity-Mindedness**

The New CTE Instructor Onboarding and Training will address several challenges:

- increased need for CTE instructors in higher education
- proper onboarding and training necessary for persons with professional expertise

but no prior teaching background

- upfront and initial discussions of diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as unconscious bias, in CTE instructor training modules

- promotion of inclusion and reduction of discrimination in the field

This project will affect current skilled CTE professionals; current CTE instructors; CTE administrators within postsecondary schools; future CTE instructors; and most importantly, current, prospective, and graduate students. Understanding the world around us, particularly how we conceptualize equality and inequity in education, depends on how we frame our learning. If they want to drive CTE forward, change leaders must be able to tell the difference between technical obstacles and adaptive challenges, according to adaptive theory. Organizational transformation necessitates both technical and adaptive approaches, but these two approaches function in fundamentally different ways and have different requirements. Leaders with an eye toward equity are those who work to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for students of color and other marginalized groups. Those in authoritative roles within the education

sector have a duty to spearhead reform and provide measurable results (Bragg & McCambly, 2018).

### **Summary of Findings**

Within the past year of being a member of this fellowship, the writer of this whitepaper has hired several CTE instructors with no teaching experience. Having this training available would be very helpful.

Since the training modules have not yet been implemented, reporting results is not possible; however, measurements of success for postsecondary institutions have been considered:

- The institution could identify new faculty hire retention rates after implementation and compare them over time (past 10 years, past 5 years, discipline specific).
- Participants may be surveyed about their experiences and the training's usefulness immediately after the training, one semester after the training (if teaching), and one year after training, if teaching.
- First-year student course evaluation surveys may be administered.

### **Recommendations**

CTE administrators have been compelled to fill teaching jobs with whomever is available due to rising student enrollments, a lack of qualified candidates, and a decline in the number of teacher preparation programs. The existing context makes it difficult for CTE institutions to ease the transition of formerly content-only specialists into their new responsibilities as teachers.

Training based on the premise that “one size fits all” will be ineffective for CTE teachers because the particular needs of CTE teachers call for tailored training. In addition, training should be ongoing rather than a once-a-year event; the focus should be on incremental

improvement, with opportunities for teachers to share ideas on a daily basis holding much better potential for long-term educational success.

The author of this whitepaper can only attest to personal experiences of hiring faculty as CTE faculty and administrator:

- o It would be feasible to have new CTE faculty training before entering the classroom.
- o Diversity, equity, and inclusion work and acknowledgment is essential to CTE faculty onboarding. Some new faculty hired directly from industry may not understand the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the classroom.
- o In completing new faculty course observations, the information presented in these modules is essential to success. New faculty may not understand the basics of pedagogy, assessment, and lesson planning. It is the responsibility of the institution to equip new CTE faculty with the tools needed to create a rich, engaging classroom, especially when the faculty had not been traditionally trained in pedagogical approaches to CTE.



## References

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