

University of Phoenix Issues White Paper on Establishing a Skills Ecosystem at a Career-focused Higher Education Institution

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White paper describes evolution of University of Phoenix adoption of skills-aligned curriculum intended to support career focus for adult learners

PHOENIX--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- **University of Phoenix** has released a new whitepaper, **“Supporting learner success: closing the skills gap between academe and industry,”** in a collaboration by authors Eve Krahe Billings, Ph.D., dean, Academic Innovation & Evaluation; Mary Elizabeth Smith, director, Learning Innovation and Strategy; Hillary Halpern, senior director, Program Deployment; and Doris Savron, vice provost. The white paper provides a foundational reflection of the University of Phoenix focus on providing career-relevant, skills-based education and authentic assessment for working adult students.

“Employers of all types are beginning to focus increasingly more on skills, in and outside of degrees,” states John Woods, Ph.D., provost and chief academic officer of University of Phoenix. “University of Phoenix has been anticipating this type of market transition, and we are ready. Today, our programs offer a skills-aligned, career-focused curriculum and suite of support tools to help our students and alumni access the potential of their chosen career pathways.”

The white paper outlines the progress of University of Phoenix over the past decade, beginning with establishing academic program life cycles that then supported innovations, policies, and processes that fostered a dynamic and institution-wide shift to skill-aligned learning.

“As an institution of higher learning for adult learners, University of Phoenix balances the traditional rigors of

academic socialization with job-focused skills definitions,” states Krahe Billings. “Our skills-mapped curriculum, which features an authentic assessment, was built from the ground up and provides a clear lens and research-based framework through which a learner can be observed attaining a skill.”

The white paper demonstrates the evolution of the University’s development and **deployment of a skills-aligned curriculum** over a four-year period. In turn, this now informs the development of tools and products, which is growing a system of **lifelong career support for students and alumni**.

“Our students are able to achieve three career relevant skills for each five-week core course they take in their degree programs,” states Savron. “When learners obtain skills in weeks, they gain more immediate value from their education and do not have to wait years for a degree before making career decisions that can be built on skills they are already acquiring.”

Earlier this year, the University’s innovative skills-aligned curriculum culminated in 100 percent of associate, bachelor’s and master’s degree programs **open for new enrollment being fully skills-mapped**.

The white paper provides an overview of components critical to creating a career-focused skills ecosystem including: cultivating industry sector relationships, mapping and aligning skills within curriculum, authentic assessment construction, contributions to a career support ecosystem, the role of Classification of Instructional Programs and Standard Occupational Classification codes by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the rise of competency-based education, learning design alignment with learning experience, the implementation of digital badging, and elevating the learner voice.

As dean of Academic Innovation & Evaluation, Krahe Billings oversees student learning assessment across the University as well as the institution’s skills-aligned curriculum initiative from the perspective that learners benefit from socialization to the rigor, critical thinking, academic expectations, and longstanding traditions that are the hallmark of higher education. Krahe Billings earned her Ph.D. in Complexity Science and Innovation at Arizona State University in 2013. She received peer reviewer status from Quality Matters in 2013 and completed a certificate in evidence-based design in 2018. Krahe Billings is a 2019 Wellesley cohort HERS fellow and a member of the Board of Directors of the American Association of University Administrators.

Smith is the Director of Learning Innovation Strategy in the Center for Teaching and Learning at University of Phoenix and previously served as the Research and Implementation Strategist and the Director of Curriculum Development. For over 30 years, Smith’s career in education has included working in curriculum development, learning design, faculty development, faculty, and e-learning roles for four universities and several community colleges as well as two educational software companies. She holds a bachelor’s in Speech Communication and Journalism from Southern Illinois University and an M.Ed. in Educational Media and Computers from Arizona State

University.

Halpern has been with University of Phoenix for 16 years and currently serves as the Senior Director Program Deployment, where she has leveraged her in-depth insights from her student support and process improvement background to develop, improve, and maintain the University Program Lifecycle (UPL) process. Recognized as "Rookie of the Year" examiner award in 2017 from Southwest Alliance of Excellence (SWAE), she has served as a lead examiner for the SWAE and as a speaker on process improvement at regional and national conferences. Halpern has a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Arizona State University, and a Master of Business Administration and Graduate Certificate in Human Resource Management from University of Phoenix.

Savron has over 23 years of experience in higher education in a variety of settings and serves as Vice Provost overseeing the strategy for University of Phoenix academic programs and curriculum design, institutional assessment and faculty, including oversight of strategy for degree, certificate and course offerings, design of curriculum and student learning outcomes for the University. Savron serves on several boards including Greater Phoenix Chamber of Commerce, Career Connectors, and the advisory council for UPCEA and AACRAO's new 2023 Convergence conference focused on the emerging field of alternative credentials in Higher Education. She is a frequent speaker at higher education events with expertise on mapping relevant skills in programs and building an infrastructure to support career tools in curriculum design, micro credentialing and other innovations in curriculum. Savron earned her MBA from Cleveland State University and is completing her doctorate in management in organizational leadership.

The full whitepaper is available at and **as a direct link here**.

About University of Phoenix

University of Phoenix innovates to help working adults enhance their careers and develop skills in a rapidly changing world. Flexible schedules, relevant courses, interactive learning, skills-mapped curriculum for our bachelor's and master's degree programs and a Career Services for Life® commitment help students more effectively pursue career and personal aspirations while balancing their busy lives. **For more information, visit phoenix.edu .**

Sharla Hooper
University of Phoenix
sharla.hooper@phoenix.edu

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