

IHE CDHE’s Career Connected Campus Designation Checklist

Introduction

The Colorado Department of Higher Education’s (CDHE’s) new strategic plan, “Building Skills for an Evolving Economy” (2023), centers the need for Colorado’s institutions of higher education (IHE) to prepare learners to receive economic value from pursuing and earning a postsecondary credential. One of the ways learners receive economic value for their education is when learners receive a credential and secure employment that is commensurate with their postsecondary credential (Burning Glass Institute and Strada Institute for the Future of Work, 2024).

To recognize Colorado’s institutions of higher education that set a high standard for how their campus engages in practices that prepare students for employment commensurate with their postsecondary credential, CDHE has created a new campus designation—CDHE’s Career Connected Campus. A career-connected college or university is an educational institution that prioritizes practical skills, professional development, and career readiness alongside academic learning. A career-connected college or university campus is committed to empowering students with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to succeed in their chosen careers and make meaningful contributions to their respective industries.

CDHE’s Career Connected Campus Designation is based on themes found in research that are shown to positively influence postsecondary learners’ careers. CDHE continues to be committed to educational equity and we have situated the Career Connected Campus Designation, alongside our social determinants of students’ success initiatives. It is imperative that institutions of higher education approach career connected learning with equity at the forefront as research shows that career connected learning experiences, such as worked based learning, further inequities and still negatively impact how students of color and women can participate in and benefit from career connected learning experiences. For the following checklist, we are requiring institutions of higher education to center equity in their career connected learning work and share with us promising practices that enable all students to benefit from career connected learning.

More than ever, Colorado needs our institutions of higher education to double down on one of the roles they perform in our state—workforce development. Higher education is one of the key players in the state’s workforce development ecosystem and each institution of higher education’s contribution to workforce development varies depending upon the institution’s history, role, and mission. We know our institutions prepare learners for careers and provide students with skills and mindsets that prepare students to be ready to adapt to an evolving, unknown future of work. Additionally, we want to acknowledge, our institutions of higher education impact workforce development by doing more than preparing learners to enter the world of work—institutions of higher education meet the workforce needs of their local and international communities through partnerships with communities, regional and national industry associations, research communities of practice, entrepreneurial enterprises, employers and philanthropic organizations.

Career Connected Campus Designation Checklist

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Career Connected Measure Equity Applied Throughout	Impactful Practice Measures	Rating: Beginning, Approaching, Meeting, Exceeding
IHE Values Career Connected Learning, Workforce Development, and Alumni Career Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President supports career connected learning and workforce development efforts through strategic plans • President prioritizes general fund budgets for career connected learning and IHE financially supports career connected learning and workforce development • IHE has a senior leadership position focused on career connected learning and support • IHE expresses in their mission, vision and/or strategic plan their commitment to career connected learning, workforce development and alumni career outcomes • IHE has designated spaces (includes virtual, on and off site and flexible space) to facilitate career services and/or career connected learning, including online and in person leaders • IHE provides career support to all students and alumni (may be term limited) (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2022) • IHE provides career support to alumni, at least for a duration of time that ensures alumni secure work commensurate with their academic credential (Burning Glass Institute and Strada Institute for the Future of Work, 2024) 	



<p>Academic Experiences are Career Connected</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% or more of academic programs (CTE included) have at least one, required work-based learning component. Ideally, required work-based learning experiences are at “Learning Through Work” (i.e., internships, clinicals, pre-apprenticeships) level of Colorado’s Work Based Learning Continuum (Colorado Workforce Development Council, n.d.). • IHE supports and recognizes the faculty who integrate required career-connected opportunities and work-based learning into their curriculum • IHE publicizes courses/programs that include a work-based learning experience on their marketing, website or course catalog • Course syllabi include stated work and essential skills gained in course • Students gain skills through curricular experiences, and at the end, can express and demonstrate skills gained • Students are encouraged to gain industry recognized credentials as part of their academic program • In addition to other work-based learning opportunities, IHE has developed a registered apprenticeship (Tesfai, L., 2019) • IHE has ratio of paid internships is greater than unpaid internships • Academic Advising includes connection to career navigation support (EAB, 2017) • IHE has made effort to create crosswalks for academic course competencies to career experiences and awards academic credit where appropriate 	
<p>Co-curricular Experiences are Career Connected</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IHE has built work study and campus employment into a high impact practice that includes mentorship, essential skills evaluations/feedback (McClellan et al., 2018) 	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IHE supports students to be able to gain and express skills gained through co-curricular experiences (Peck, 2017) • Career Services are proactive regarding serving students' career needs based on identities (needs and future aspirations) and empowers students to have a voice to recognize and address career decisions and possible adverse situations in the workplace 	
<p>IHE can demonstrate substantial Industry, Community, and Regional Partnerships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IHE can describe how feedback from employer and industry partners, and/or advisory boards has impacted curriculum to remain relevant (Gaston, P. & Van Noy, M., 2022) • IHE is represented at regional, relevant sector partnerships (Colorado Workforce Development Council, n.d.) • IHE works with employers to create opportunities to upskill and reskill employers' incumbent workers • Regional employers pay for incumbent workers to attend school at IHE • IHE celebrates employers who provide paid opportunities, covers work-related expenses, and includes student employee in culture of company 	
<p>Data Informed Practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IHE collects and analyzes post graduate career outcomes and outcome data. Data is quantitative, qualitative and is disaggregated, accessible and shared with potential and current learners (including companies and organizations where students are employed following graduation) • Identifies and remedies inequities in career services utilization and post-graduate outcomes • IHE utilizes post-graduate outcome and success data to make strategic decisions about what their academic programs 	



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• IHE has a process to reach out to alumni who are underemployed following graduation• Career data is utilized to make decisions at IHE• Students have opportunities to interact with and learn from IHE alumni• Alumni return to IHE to recruit students for work based learning and full-time positions• IHE utilizes and shares Colorado’s Talent Pipeline Report with campus community	
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