

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAYBOOK: A MEANINGFUL APPROACH TO PREPARING STUDENTS FOR REAL-WORLD SUCCESS

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## *AN INTERACTIVE PRESENTATION*

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### *EXTENDED ABSTRACT*

Many students (and their parents) view a college degree as a golden ticket to a high-paying job. In reality, the college degree is simply one aspect of a multi-dimensional approach to securing employment in the students' chosen field. It is simply not enough for new graduates to have basic knowledge and comprehension of their academic discipline. Today's employers seek individuals who already possess the skills and experiences necessary to make an immediate impact on their team. Most importantly, employers want to hire individuals who can find a meaningful connection between all that they know, do, and value.

This presentation examined a unique culture which was created to provide a transformational learning approach to preparing students for real-world success. Audience members participated in the development of a 4-year Professional Development Playbook designed to allow students to apply theoretical concepts through active engagement in applied learning experiences. The following embedded curriculum ideas were highlighted: hard skills, certifications, work-related experiences, service learning, leadership, and involvement in the profession.

The historical framework for the presentation stemmed from a 1990 initiative in which the Tarleton State University Kinesiology Department hosted a collaborative retreat in which current faculty, retired faculty, students, alumni, and representatives from various professional organizations were invited to attend. The basic concept was to take a hard look at the departmental mission and curriculum offering to improve critical thinking skills and increase the level of job-preparedness for the students.

One of the biggest outcomes from that retreat was the creation of a Professional Development plan that would focus on applied learning experiences, reflection, and intentional instruction that targeted mind-body-spirit. Specifically, students would be encouraged to embrace learning, apply the knowledge and skills in their daily experiences, and synthesize these experiences as future professionals. The goal of the retreat participants was to witness permanent changes in behavior. Little did we know that we were embarking upon a transformational learning philosophy of education.

Twenty-seven years later, the Kinesiology faculty are still committed to the transformative learning approach to the scholarship of teaching and learning. The curriculum includes a three-dimensional approach to the transformative learning process: intellectual, physical, and emotional. Professional development targets have been strategically embedded within the 120-hour course sequence: certifications, experiences, leadership, membership, research, and service.

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