

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A SEAMLESS CURRICULUM

A Technical Assistance Document

INTRODUCTION

America's education system is a national topic of discussion and concern. A major concern is how the system accomplishes one of its most essential goals: preparing students for success in the workplace. The work environment is changing rapidly and requires highly skilled employees. However, many of today's graduates are not prepared to succeed in this new workplace. The dramatic shift from an industrial to an information oriented economy requires major changes in curriculum offerings and delivery at all education levels. Each state must ensure its citizens have educational opportunities necessary for achieving success in a highly competitive workplace.

In 1996, the West Virginia Legislature passed the Jobs Through Education Act (Senate Bill 300) and Senate Bill 547 to continue needed education reform. West Virginia's college-going rate is the lowest in the nation, and nearly fifty percent of those students who do choose to go on to college are in remedial classes. Clearly, innovative legislation, policy, and other initiatives are needed to change the way education and training are delivered in West Virginia. One such initiative is Tech Prep/TPAD, technical preparation for an Associate Degree.

The West Virginia Tech Prep Associate Degree initiative provides a forum for the secondary and post-secondary levels to re-define, align, and strengthen program offerings through a seamless curriculum. A seamless curriculum is defined as ***a continuum of competencies which provides transition from one education level to another without unnecessary duplication. Student progression is based on the mastery of competencies to established standards.*** Implementing a seamless curriculum will lay the groundwork for educational changes. It is a vehicle to provide stronger curricula foundations, increase competence levels, and provide opportunities for student choice through multiple entry and exit points.

In an effort to assist local consortia in the development and to lay the groundwork for consistency from institution to institution, representatives from secondary and post-secondary education were invited to a two day workshop in Beckley, West Virginia to forge the recommended guidelines to establish the needed process.

PURPOSE

Tech Prep consortia are funded to develop seamless curricula between the secondary and post-secondary education levels. The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines for local consortia as they begin the process for developing a seamless curriculum focused on the skilled/Tech Prep level pathway (4 years secondary + 2 years post-secondary) within the cluster/major format. These guidelines could be adapted to develop seamless curriculum between any and/or all education levels.

GOALS OF A SEAMLESS CURRICULUM

Efforts to establish seamless curricula among educational levels are intended to improve the overall quality of education in West Virginia by

- **facilitating the transition of students from one education level to another;**
- **reducing duplication and gaps in identified competency requirements;**
- **increasing the high school graduation rate in the state;**
- **increasing the college attendance and retention rate in the state;**
- **enhancing the efficient use of limited resources; and**
- **enhancing the level of skill and knowledge of the technical work force in the state.**

Roles and responsibilities

A very important element of the seamless curriculum is the formation of a collaborative team (secondary, post-secondary, and business/labor) with assigned roles and responsibilities for the seamless curriculum development process. The task is too involved to permit the responsibility to rest with two or three individuals.

The process should be a *consortium project* with *all* members sharing data and information pertinent to their particular areas. The following is a list of suggested committees and responsibilities to address each of the nine steps in developing the seamless curriculum:

PROGRAM GOALS - Committee

Members: Secondary and Higher Education representatives, Program Advisory Committees, and Business/Labor representatives.

Responsibilities: Provide documentation (worksheet 1; page 6) and make recommendations for possible future programs.
Report and submit information to the consortium.

COMPETENCIES, STANDARDS, AND CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT - Committee

Members: Secondary and Post-secondary faculty members, curriculum supervisors, Associate Degree Chairs, and Business/Labor representatives from the program area.

Responsibilities: Provide documentation (worksheet 2, 3, 4; pages 7, 8, 9). Report and submit information to the consortium.

RESOURCES - Committee

Members: County School Principals, Provosts, College Presidents, County School Superintendents, Secondary and Post-secondary faculty, Business/Labor Representatives from the program area.

Responsibilities: Provide documentation (worksheet 5; page 10). Report and submit information to the consortium.

INCENTIVES - Committee

- Members:** College Presidents/Provosts, Principals, Superintendents, Registrars, Secondary and Post-secondary faculty or department chairperson.
- Responsibilities:** Provide documentation (worksheet 6; page 11). Report and submit information to the consortium.

MARKETING - Committee

- Members:** Tech Prep Coordinator, Secondary and Post-secondary representatives (counselors and faculty), and Business/Labor representatives.
- Responsibilities:** Report and submit marketing information to the consortium (worksheet 7; page 12 and 13).

ASSESSMENT - Committee

- Members:** Secondary and Post-secondary Representatives, Business/Labor representatives.
- Responsibilities:** Conduct an annual assessment of the current seamless curricula and report the findings to the consortium. The report should include any observed areas creating ineffectiveness.

SUMMARY SHEET - To be completed by post-secondary and secondary key decision makers.

The Tech Prep Coordinator should be responsible for -

- / organizing the various committees
- / acting as an catalyst for getting action from the committees
- / compiling the seamless curriculum document

WORKSHEET 1

defining PROGRAM GOALS

Community & Technical Colleges (CTC) need to take the lead in determining appropriate and viable programs available to students finishing a cluster/major curriculum format in grades 9-12. The rapidly changing workplace is putting a higher priority on the ability of the CTC to keep their programs attuned to student and workplace demands.

1. Define program objectives.

2. Document student and workplace demand (minimum of 4 recognized sources).
Include but not limited to the following: (Check data sources used)

	Used
a. Economic Development Office	_____
b. Occupational Outlook	_____
c. SOICC	_____
d. Unemployment Securities	_____
e. Local, State, National Surveys	
f. Information from Career Guidance System	
g. Other _____	

3. Validate needed level of preparation through at least two (2) recognized sources:
(Check data sources used)

	Used
a. Advisory Groups	_____
b. Published Reports	_____
c. Position Announcements/Job Descriptions	_____
d. Other _____	

4. Determine current/projected enrollment in the program through at least two (2) recognized sources:

Enrollment Number:	(Check data sources used)	
		Used
a. Major selections at the secondary level		_____
b. Adult/community surveys		_____
c. Documented results of recruiting efforts		_____
d. Existing numbers in current program		_____

e. Other _____

5. Estimate (or calculate) cost of the program and validate support.
(attach information)

Worksheet 2

Identifying & Validating Competencies

The consistency and quality of the seamless curriculum is built during this step. Trust between educational levels can be bridged if both parties understand what should be mastered. Business/Labor have a large role to play during this part of the process. They will determine to a large extent what content material needs to be mastered.

1. Documentation of needed competencies from at least four (4) recognized (credible) sources. Include but not limited to:

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a. Employer surveys | e. Accreditation standards |
| b. State IGO's | f. Research |
| c. Licensing Agencies | g. Essential General Study Skills |
| d. Advisory Committees | h. Other |

2. Used the following sources to determine competencies:

- a.
- b.
- c.

Worksheet 3

Setting standards

A quality seamless curriculum sets high standards for students. These standards need to be reflected at an identified mastery level. Students should be aware of the standards for each competency.

- 1. Each identified competency is written in a performance objective (i.e., condition, performance, criterion for assessment) that reflects mastery.
Describe Process (who was involved, sources used, documentation, etc.):**

- 2. Check the sources used to validate mastery (at least 2).
Include but not limited to:**

	Used
a. Written and Performance Tests	_____
b. Portfolios	_____
c. Senior Projects	_____
d. National Exams	_____
e. Recognized Credentialing	_____

Worksheet 4

Aligning Curriculum

Creating a sequenced curriculum without unnecessary duplication and without competency gaps is vital to all students. A seamless curriculum must open doors for students. It must not track them or fail to provide the needed competencies for future success.

- 1. Identified competencies with performance mastery criteria are assigned to an education level. (Attach list)**
- 2. Validate sequencing without duplication or gaps through a curriculum processing tool such as IPSI or any other valid process.**

What evidence reveals no duplication or gaps exist?

- 2. Identify and describe work-based learning opportunities at each grade level.**

9th

10th

11th

12th

13th

14th

- 3. Identify and describe career development responsibilities at each level:
Who is responsible?**

	Secondary	CTC
c. Parent/Student Orientation	_____	_____
d. Occupational Outlook data dissemination	_____	_____
e. College information, i.e, financial aid, program availability, tuition costs,	_____	_____
c. Career options	_____	_____
d. Other:	_____	_____

Worksheet 5

Identifying resources

The foundation for quality programs resides in the availability of pertinent resources. Many outstanding programs have been developed in spite of limited monies through innovative efforts (e.g., collaboration and partnering).

- 1. Conduct and report to the consortium a self-assessment concerning the following resources (secondary and CTC):**
 - a. Facilities -**
 - b. Staffing -**
 - c. Staff Development -**
 - d. Instructional Materials/Supplies/Technology -**
 - e. Equipment -**
 - f. Advisory Committees -**
 - g. Work-based Learning Opportunities(sites) -**

h. Funding -

WORKSHEET 6

Providing INCENTIVES

Students and parents need to see tangible evidence that a seamless curriculum can enhance student options and opportunities. This area also provides reasons for secondary, post-secondary and business/labor to get involved. This component of the seamless curriculum should “make an offer that can’t be refused.”

1. Document the use of the following items: (Check incentives used and attach documentation)

- | | Offer |
|---|--------------|
| a. Direct entry to the student’s program of choice at the CTC, 4-year college or other post-secondary training program level | _____ |
| b. Opportunities for Acceleration Options (e.g., testing out) | _____ |
| c. Award of Transcript Credits | _____ |
| d. Award of Dual Credit | _____ |
| e. Significant Job Placements | |

2. Describe the process used for the offered selections:

- a.**

worksheet 7

marketing

What is not known will not happen. Making changes, designing a new curriculum, and providing incentives will not insure students opting for the seamless curriculum pathway. Counselors, parents, students, and the business/labor community must be cognitive of the many benefits of a seamless curriculum. The marketing component must be well designed and implemented if a seamless curriculum is to become reality.

1. Identify and document at least 2 different strategies for communicating with the following audiences:

e. Students

Strategy 1 -

_____ Strategy 2 -

e. Parents

_____ Strategy 1 -

Strategy 2 -

e. Counselors/Teacher Advisors

_____ Strategy 1 -

_____ Strategy 2 -

e. Secondary educators

Strategy 1 -

Strategy 2 -

e. Post-secondary educators

Strategy 1 -

Strategy 2 -

**f. Business/Labor
Strategy 1 -**

Strategy 2 - _____

- 2. Attach a sample of marketing information (e.g., brochure, video tape, meeting agenda), and describe the message content being marketed:**

Message:

WORKSHEET 8

ASSESSMENT

Process, time lines, and responsibilities determined by the Assessment Committee.

WORKSHEET 9

SEAMLESS CURRICULUM SUMMARY

1. All Associate Degree Programs associated with this cluster/major have been evaluated and provides documentation for employment opportunities. Yes ___ No ___

1. All major core courses and two (2) of the recommended electives were approved by post-secondary and the six (6) courses were placed in the recommended syllabus format. Yes ___ No ___

1. All mirror courses at the post-secondary level (secondary major core and recommended electives) were placed in the recommended syllabus format. Yes ___ No ___

1. After review of courses (secondary and post-secondary) :

Course content at the secondary and post-secondary level are aligned;
Yes ___ No ___

Dual credit will be awarded for _____, _____,
_____.

Articulated credit will be awarded for _____, _____,
_____.

Advanced placement for students in _____ program will be available.

Scholarships are available to students who _____
_____.

Other: _____

1. The following resources are available: _____
_____.

1. A marketing plan is developed. Yes ___ No ___
It will be implemented _____.

1. An assessment process has been developed. Yes ___ No ___
It will be implemented _____.

COORDINATOR'S CHECKLIST AND SUMMARY SHEET

To be turned in to the Community College Council at the end of each fiscal year.

1. All syllabi (secondary and postsecondary) for the 4 core in the major and two recommended electives have been completed. List them:

2. Test banks exist for the 4 core in the major and the two recommended electives. List them:

3. The following courses have been designated for Transcript in Escrow from what seamless model:
Secondary Courses: for what Postsecondary Courses Model:

4. The following courses have been designated as dual credit:
Secondary Courses Postsecondary Courses Model:

5. Orientation for principals, counselors, superintendents, on the seamless initiative has been held.
When/dates:

6. Consortium members have agreed to adopt the following seamless models and the adoption will take place when:
Model: Date to adopt:

7. Consortium has adopted the following seamless models and are currently on going in the county school systems:

8. To date, _____ students have participated in the seamless models.

CHECKLIST FOR ADOPTION WORKSHOPS

1. Letters sent out to all principals and teachers at least 3 weeks prior to the workshop.
2. Consortium identified teachers who would participate and guaranteed their attendance to the workshop.
3. Suitable meeting place with round tables for the participants preferred.
4. Morning Break and Lunch provided.
5. Syllabi for the 4 core in the major and the two recommended electives duplicated for handouts.
6. 2 easels at the meeting place.
7. Power point projector and computer.
8. Name Tags