



Scaling Apprenticeship

Emerging Practice Spotlight



University of Cincinnati

Next Lives Here

**NEXT Apprenticeship
Program**

Business Engagement at the University of Cincinnati

The University of Cincinnati (UC), in collaboration with five partner institutions and the computing and informatics industry in the Midwest and the eastern U.S., created the Next Apprenticeship Program. UC's strategic initiative, [Next Lives Here](#), focuses on teaching, research, and service in the community and is committed to offering opportunities to a wide range of UC students. This commitment aligns with UC's application of 21st-century apprenticeship training as part of a long-standing co-op program, through which it has partnered with 120 nonprofits to place 402 students while attracting new funding from donors to add to the program. UC's apprenticeship programs have a dedicated employer engagement team, known as job developers, who communicate with and manage relationships with employers and students. Dedicated employer engagement staff is a key element of success.

Scaling Apprenticeship in Action

UC is providing **PRO BONO EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT CONSULTING** to Cleveland State University, Iowa State University, Lorain County Community College, University of Kentucky, and the University of Louisville.

Evolution of Business Engagement at UC

The UC business engagement strategy and the Next Lives Here initiative are extensions of the university's long-standing cooperative education program and partnerships with its regional business community. [UC's cooperative education program](#) began in 1906 and transitioned from a faculty-driven model to one using professional job developers to conduct outreach, manage relationships, and minimize the handoff of employers to various staff and departments at the university in 2018. This has reduced the effort needed to maintain a relationship with an employer. UC's revised business engagement approach has led to viewing the employment community through an industry sector lens rather than through the lens of an individual relationship with a particular employer. This evolution has led the Next Lives Here apprenticeship initiative to grow from a small staff to the President of UC describing apprenticeships as a priority for the university during a recent commencement speech.

Benefits of Dedicated Business Engagement Staff

UC's business engagement strategy and Next Lives Here program have improved the university's business engagement efforts by providing scalable and consistent engagement that develops student talent while providing financial benefit to the employer community. This has created a business ecosystem fueled by consistent guidelines for students and



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employers and the addition of full-time UC staff to ensure quality control. Communication and engagement are systemized using UC's PAL system, a platform that sends automated, preprogrammed emails and follow-up surveys to students and employers to maintain communication and progress. These practices and successes have shown that UC's model is scalable and replicable by other universities in additional communities.

Business Engagement in Action

UC engages with a diverse range of industry clusters, including the technology and creative industries, advertising, design, finance and banking, manufacturing, chemical industries, and the healthcare sector.

The business engagement and Next Lives Here teams use NAICS codes to look for companies operating in each of these industries. The business engagement staff use software programs and platforms like Burning Glass,

[Our relationship with UC has] been extremely easy. Everyone at UC is very responsive. [UC] leverages technology to help us reach students, like Handshake.... We have identified UC as one of our core schools we'll continue to invest in a recruit from.

Mara Scaliti Chase, Senior Campus Recruiter, US Bank

LinkedIn Sales Navigator, and LexisNexis to research potential business partners. Customer relationship management software, such as Salesforce, is also used to monitor employer outreach metrics, track leads and contacts, and manage data. The business engagement team supports companies that have had challenges retaining employees as well as employers that may benefit from the diverse student population at UC.

With a full-time manager, quality control has been outstanding. Prior [to the manager role], we were working to be consistent, [and] sometimes there would be confusion from shifts in language.

Michael Sharp, UC Service Learning Program Director

Essential Components of Business Engagement at UC

UC and its cooperative education program have developed a business engagement strategy that is structured like a sales team and includes a permanent Partner Development Team Director who leads a staff of job developers. Team members have become experts in specific industries, allowing them to deeply understand how UC can work with various industry sectors. The team uses labor market data to examine local, state, and national employment trends and identify and anticipate employer needs.

The business engagement team is part of a university department that develops curricula driven by industry partnerships and employer needs. Several staff members are university funded and not dependent on grant resources or financial gifts to the university. They are funded separately to provide stable staffing and resources. In total, UC possesses 15 job developers to service for-profit and nonprofit employers.

Elements of Success

The business engagement team is structured like a sales team. Team members have defined goals and track metrics, including the number of contacts per week with employers, as well as demographic information to meet outreach goals related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Team members conduct research before contacting employers and assess the best contact and determine how to "pitch" UC's program to potential partners. For example, some employers have or are familiar with apprenticeship programs while others may have more experience with cooperative education.



Developing Relationships

80%

of the employers are repeat customers

UC sees the success of each apprentice with an employer as contributing to the employers' trust in UC and their willingness to employ additional student apprentices. For this reason, UC student apprentices participate in an online, self-directed course consisting of assignments and reflections designed to identify the skills they are demonstrating and developing during their experience and how those skills are transferable. Students are also paid during their apprenticeship, some directly by their employers and others from UC grant resources.

Next Steps

The UC Next Apprenticeship Program plans to develop a “pre-reflection” course for students before they are placed with an employer to complement the existing coursework that supports apprentices during the apprenticeship. This is being viewed as a virtual “boot camp” to prepare the students for employment and representing UC. They plan to add additional workshops hosted by peer employers to provide information about the Next Apprenticeship Program and refine their diversity, equity, and inclusion recruitment by collaborating with employers that have been successful in the Next Apprenticeship Program.

Tips and Strategies

- Build on institutional structures and relationships by identifying existing contacts and using alumni connections.
- Start with a small permanent staff and expand as the program grows and processes are refined.
- Identify community partners or alumni to help the business engagement staff focus on recruiting and retaining employer relationships.
- Hold virtual events (hiring events, open houses, orientations) for employers and apprentices to connect.
- Develop mentorship training to share with participating employers.
- Streamline forms and applications to ease the administrative burden for employers and apprentices.

Resources and Forms

- Next Lives Here [website](#)
- UC's [Cooperative Education Program](#)
- Next Apprenticeship [information](#)
- Next Report [Spring 2021](#)
- Next [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

More Information

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