

Strategic Affiliation Monthly Newsletter

January 2024

Construction Affiliation Implementation Team (AIT#3) hitting its stride

The Construction and Construction Management Affiliation Implementation Team #3, one of the first Strategic Affiliation Initiative teams, is making significant progress toward attaining the initiative's goals. The team's progress underscores the shared commitment of the dedicated professionals from FHSU, NCK Tech, and Northwest Tech, who are working to create stronger and aligned academic programs, eliminate unnecessary administrative barriers, and address regional workforce needs.

With a vast range of program specializations to consider, the implementation team narrowed its focus to professional pathways where alignment among all three entities currently exists. The team selected carpentry/cabinetmaking programs as the best option for implementing the vision of the affiliation. Related areas in construction, such as electricity, HVAC, and heavy equipment, will be tackled as the initiative moves forward in the coming years.

Early success

One notable early success serves as a testament to the team's commitment to flexible and accessible education. The team has conceptualized an innovative curriculum pathway based on the carpentry/cabinetmaking associates degree program. The novel approach the team is exploring empowers students to complete a one-year carpentry certificate at a technical college and seamlessly transition to FHSU's Applied Technology program for second-year classes. Students who complete their second-year studies under this pathway model could then transfer earned FHSU credits back to their technical college and earn their two-year associate of applied science degree.

Exploring reverse transfer options

The implementation team also explored the possibilities of other reverse transfer opportunities to enhance FHSU's Construction Management program by adding specialized one-credit-hour construction content taught by technical college industry experts. These short courses would be designed to cover essential construction facets not typically addressed in a four-year plan. They will also offer valuable insights for students aspiring to leadership roles in the field with additional training in various specialties, such as welding or attaining a commercial driver's license.

Mapping out the future of technical education in Western Kansas

To create comprehensive educational pathways from a selection of technical education programs, the team has successfully mapped transitions from AAS degrees to BS degrees in Welding Technology, Engineering Technology (CAD), and Automotive Technology. This holistic approach demonstrates the team's dedication to meeting students' interests and educational goals.

The team eagerly anticipates further developments as they focus on shaping educational landscapes and empowering students to achieve success.

Construction Management Implementation Team Industry Partners

- Commercial Builders
- Hess Services
- Kansas Contractors Association





FROM THE DIRECTOR OF STATEGIC AFFILIATION

Peter Laipson, PH.D.

As I write this note, I am still basking in the happy glow of our Affiliation Initiative Summit on January 10. Hosted in Beloit by NCK Tech, the Summit was attended by the leadership of the Affiliation Implementation Teams (AITs), whose members are charged with developing the solutions that are driving this affiliation initiative, members of the Affiliation Steering Committee, and our three Presidents. The day offered the rare and welcome chance for those deeply involved in the affiliation to meet in person rather than remotely; it also provided an opportunity for each team to offer reflections about both the process and products of its work to date. Unsurprisingly, the importance of relationships to effective collaboration emerged as an important theme of the day. It was especially gratifying to hear so many participants speak appreciatively about how well the teams are working together.

The fruits of that work were evident in the teams' reports, which reflect substantial progress since the last Summit in June 2023. Some teams' efforts are directly focused on creating new opportunities for students. The Allied Health and Nursing team, for instance, described their planning to create easy pathways for A.A. students who have earned licensure as RNs to earn the BSN. Similarly, the Construction team is creating a pathway for students who have earned an AAS in Carpentry or Construction at the technical colleges to earn a Bachelor's degree in Construction Management at FHSU. Other groups have been more occupied with the tasks necessary to showcase and implement the new relationship among the three institutions. These include planning for changes to branding and marketing materials, producing new branded clothing and merchandise, and beginning the many changes necessary to the IT infrastructures on our campuses as the three institutions move towards formal affiliation.

Speaking of formalities, one major achievement since the last newsletter is the submission of our application (all 700+ pages of it!) to the Higher Learning Commission, the accrediting body of all three institutions, in support of the affiliation. The HLC has scheduled a site visit for March 18 and 19 – which campuses and when is still to be determined -- and will notify us of the Commission's decision after its meeting in late June.

Even as the current AITs continue their work, three more Implementation Teams launched in December: Secondary Partnerships (AIT 6, chaired by Kyle Stacken of FHSU and vice-chaired by Kayla Luera of Northwest Tech); General Education (AIT 7, chaired by Jennifer Brown of NCK Tech and vice-chaired by Trista Zimmerman of Northwest Tech), and Student Success (AIT 8, chaired by Shane Britt of NCK Tech and vice-chaired by Taylor Kriley of FHSU). You can expect to hear more about their work in the months to come.

Strategic Affiliation Initiative Timeline

