

# Essential Learning, General Education, and Career Readiness Collaborative

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## Why is this Collaborative Needed?

Through the NJ Pathways initiative, colleges are hearing from employers and industry partners that, in addition to job-related skills, they need employees with durable skills. These durable skills are the essential learning that is embedded in General Education courses.

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All students at NJ's community colleges are required to complete 21-33 credits of General Education (the amount differs based on their degree type). General Education prepares students for further study, engaged citizenship, personal development, lifelong learning, and career readiness. Students are rarely aware, however, of the critical connections between their General Education coursework and career readiness.

## EDUCATION PARTNERS:

Atlantic Cape Community  
College

Bergen Community College

Brookdale Community College

Camden County College

Mercer County Community  
College

Middlesex College

County College of Morris

Ocean County College

Passaic County Community  
College

Raritan Valley Community  
College

Rowan College of Burlington  
County

Salem Community College

Sussex County Community  
College

UCNJ Union College of Union  
County, NJ

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This project brings together faculty and administrators from 14 Community Colleges to discuss the career readiness competencies that are embedded in their courses and strategies to make the connections between General Education and career readiness transparent to students.

### National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)

#### Career Readiness Competencies:

Communication

Critical Thinking

Professionalism

Leadership

Equity & Inclusion

Career & Self-Development

Teamwork

Technology

## **PATHWAY CONNECTIONS:**

Connection to High School (Non-Credit)

Connection to High School (Dual Enrollment)

Community College (Non Credit)

**Community College (Credit)**

Apprenticeship Development

PLA for Apprenticeship RTI

PLA

Connection between Community Colleges (1+1)

Experiential Learning

Connection to CBOs

Adult Learners

Adult Literacy

Connection to 4-Yr College/University

Professional Development

Pilot

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## **Pathway Connection Progress:**

Over 100 faculty and administrators from disciplines such as Communication, English, History, Mathematics, Philosophy, Science, Social Science, Technology, and World Language participated in three statewide convenings. These sessions focused on embedding NACE Career Readiness Competencies into course outcomes and designing assignments that help students articulate their career preparation. Faculty also worked locally with their campus colleagues to advance these efforts.

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## **Ongoing Efforts:**

Creation of a shared repository to collect and disseminate revised course materials and ideas.

## **Ancillary Activities or Outcomes:**

This work is informing a parallel project to revitalize the General Education Framework in use at NJ's community colleges.

## **Words of Advice:**

Sometimes all it takes is a new lens—in this case, the NACE Competencies—to spark innovation from passionate faculty as they continuously revise their meaningful courses, activities and assignments for the students.

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## **Pathway Connection Progress:**

More than 100 faculty and administrators attended a presentation from Dr. Niesha Taylor, Director of Career Readiness at NACE, introducing the Career Competency Approach (November 8, 2025). Faculty continued conversations at the local level, sharing the model and exploring how to apply it within their own disciplines.

## **Ongoing Efforts:**

Faculty began piloting revised assignments and assessments in Spring 2025 courses. This iterative approach will allow for summer evaluation and scaling in Fall 2025.

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## **Ancillary Activities or Outcomes:**

The initiative is reshaping how students perceive General Education —not as a checklist, but as an essential part of career preparation.

## **Words of Advice:**

“Good things take time. Better things take a little longer.” Faculty-led innovation flourishes when time and space are provided for reflection and creativity.



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## RVCC Holds Kickoff for Statewide Initiative Focusing on General Education, Career Readiness

Thursday, November 14, 2024



Understanding the importance of providing students with the “soft skills” and “durable skills” valued by employers to succeed in today’s job market, Raritan Valley Community College launched the Pathways to Career Initiative, “Essential Learning, General Education, and Career Readiness Center for Workforce